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THE NEW YORK TIMES

THE RISE AND FALL OF

THE TRIGAN EMPIRE

VOLUME V

MIKE BUTTERWORTH - DON LAWRENCE
OLIVER FREY

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THE TRIGAN EMPIRE

WRITER
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VOLUME V

LII

THE TRIGAN EMPIRE

THE MAN FROM THE FUTURE

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5th April 1975 – 31st May 1975

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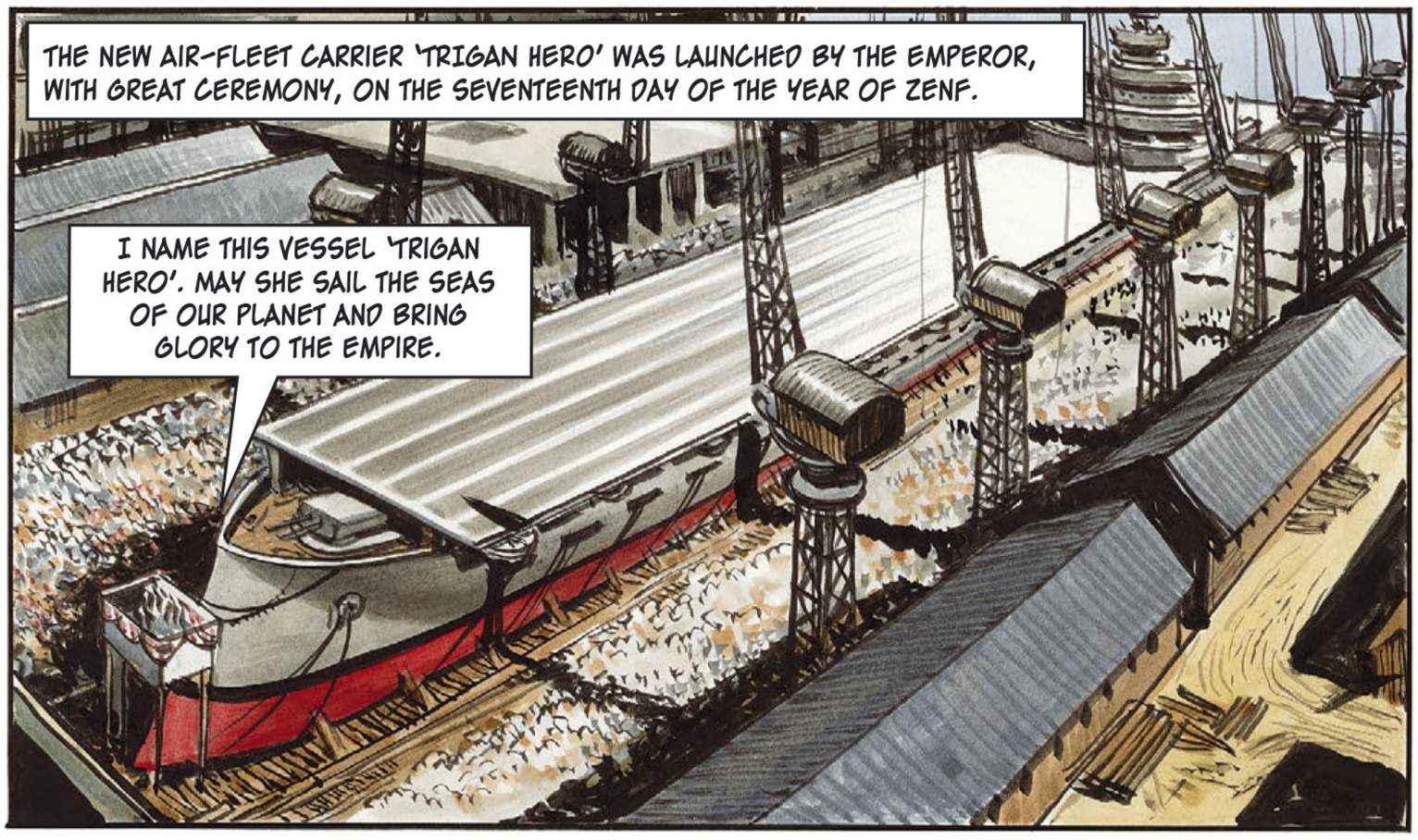
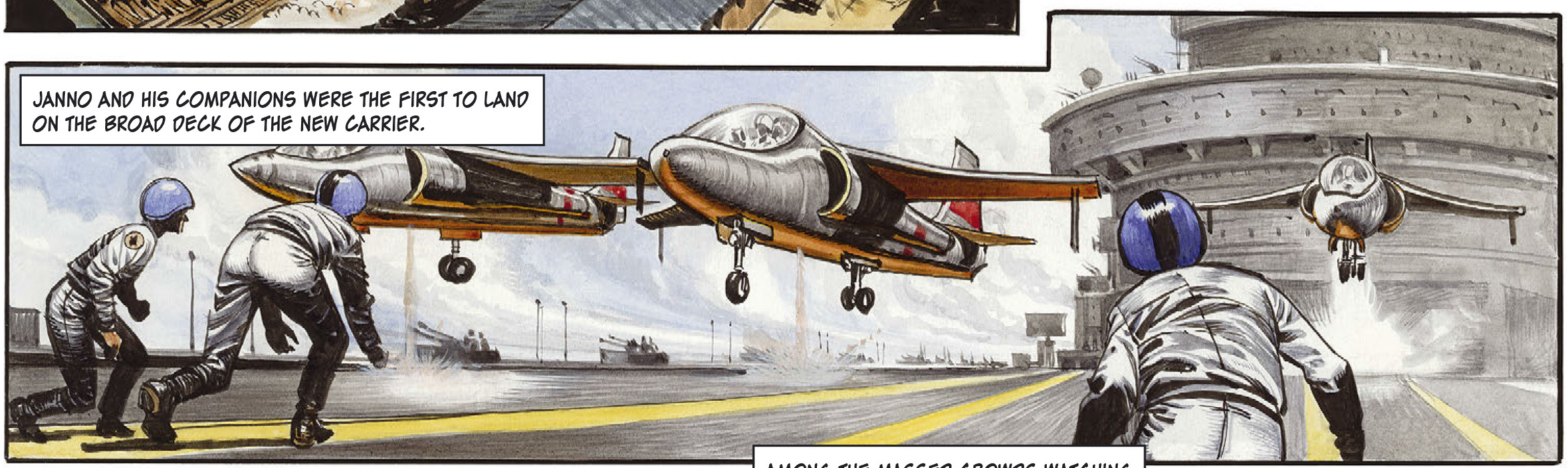
Art by Don Lawrence


THE NEW AIR-FLEET CARRIER 'TRIGAN HERO' WAS LAUNCHED BY THE EMPEROR, WITH GREAT CEREMONY, ON THE SEVENTEENTH DAY OF THE YEAR OF ZENF.
I NAME THIS VESSEL 'TRIGAN HERO'. MAY SHE SAIL THE SEAS OF OUR PLANET AND BRING GLORY TO THE EMPIRE.

THE EMPEROR'S NEPHEW, JANNO, HIMSELF A PILOT IN THE AIR-FLEET, WAS FLYING OVER THE SCENE OF THE LAUNCHING.
THERE SHE GOES! BE READY TO LAND IN FORMATION AS SOON AS SHE'S IN MID-HARBOUR.


JANNO AND HIS COMPANIONS WERE THE FIRST TO LAND ON THE BROAD DECK OF THE NEW CARRIER.

THE 'TRIGAN HERO' WAS LEAVING IMMEDIATELY FOR THE GREAT CENTRAL OCEAN, WHERE A WAR WITH THE STATE OF LOKA WAS THREATENING.
AS SOON AS LOKA GETS NEWS THAT WE'RE AT SEA, THEY'LL HAVE SECOND THOUGHTS ABOUT MAKING TROUBLE.
YEAH, JANNO. WITH WHAT WE CARRY ON THIS SHIP, WE COULD TAKE ON LOKA SINGLE-HANDED!

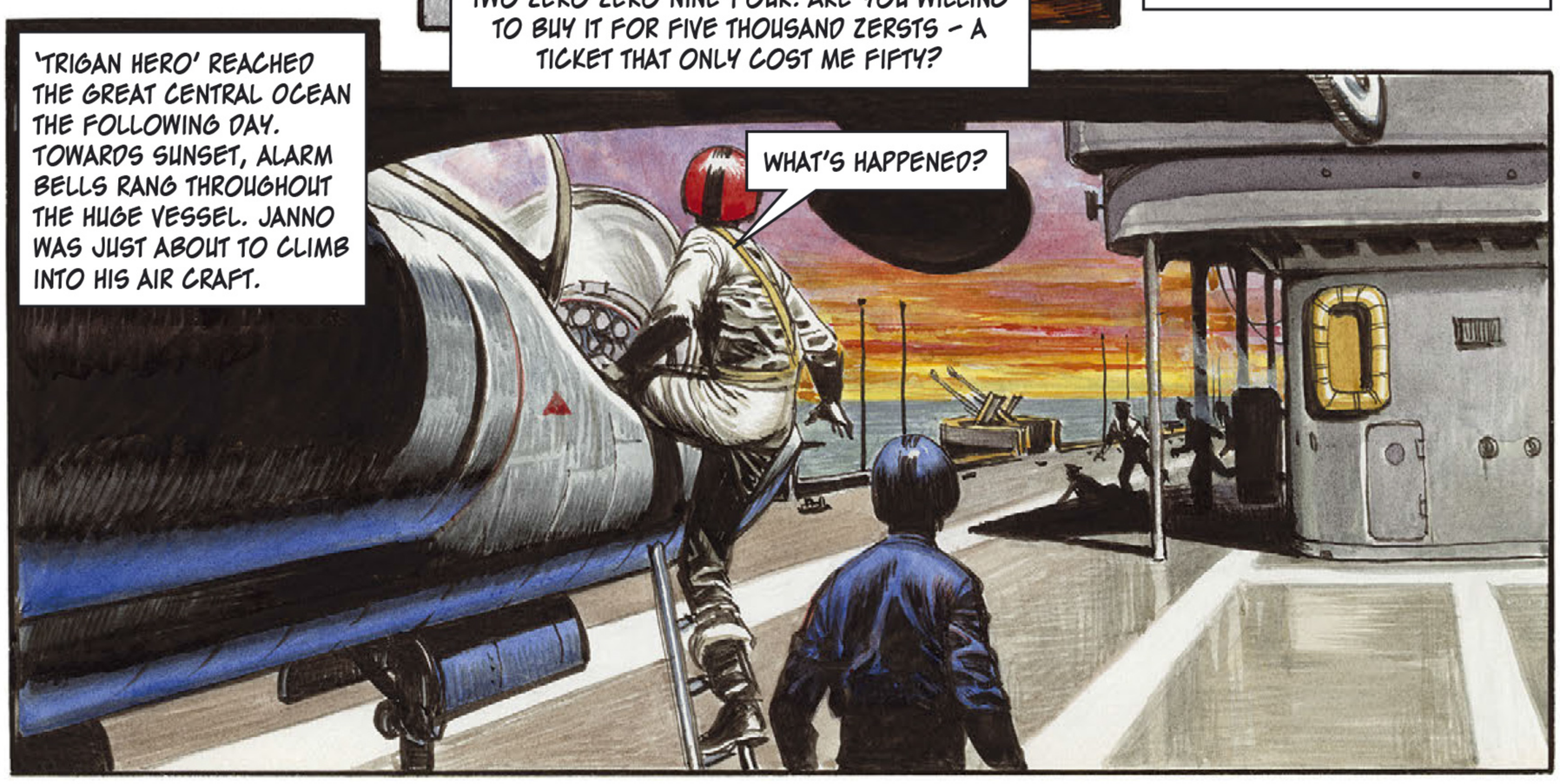
AMONG THE MASSED CROWDS WATCHING THE DEPARTURE OF THE GREAT VESSEL WAS AN INDIVIDUAL WITH RED HAIR.
A FINE SHIP!
AYE! MAKES YOU FEEL PROUD TO BE A TRIGAN!
THOSE ABOUT HIM WOULD HAVE BEEN SHOCKED TO KNOW HIS THOUGHTS AT THAT MOMENT.
A PITY THAT 'TRIGAN HERO' IS GOING TO SINK ON HER MAIDEN VOYAGE!

THE RED-HEADED ONE HAD AN ASSIGNATION THAT DAY. HE MET A STRANGER, BY PRIOR ARRANGEMENT, IN THE GREAT SQUARE OF THE CITY.
I RECOGNISE YOU FROM YOUR DESCRIPTION. YOU'RE THE FELLOW WHO ADVERTISED FOR THE LOTTERY TICKET WITH THE SPECIAL NUMBER, AREN'T YOU?
I AM. DO YOU HAVE IT?

THE TRIGAN IMPERIAL LOTTERY, IN ADDITION TO PROVIDING USEFUL REVENUE FOR THE STATE, PAID OUT ONE MASSIVE PRIZE EVERY QUARTER YEAR.
I AM SATISFIED.
THIS IS TICKET NUMBER SEVEN THREE SIX TWO ZERO ZERO NINE FOUR. ARE YOU WILLING TO BUY IT FOR FIVE THOUSAND ZERSTS – A TICKET THAT ONLY COST ME FIFTY?

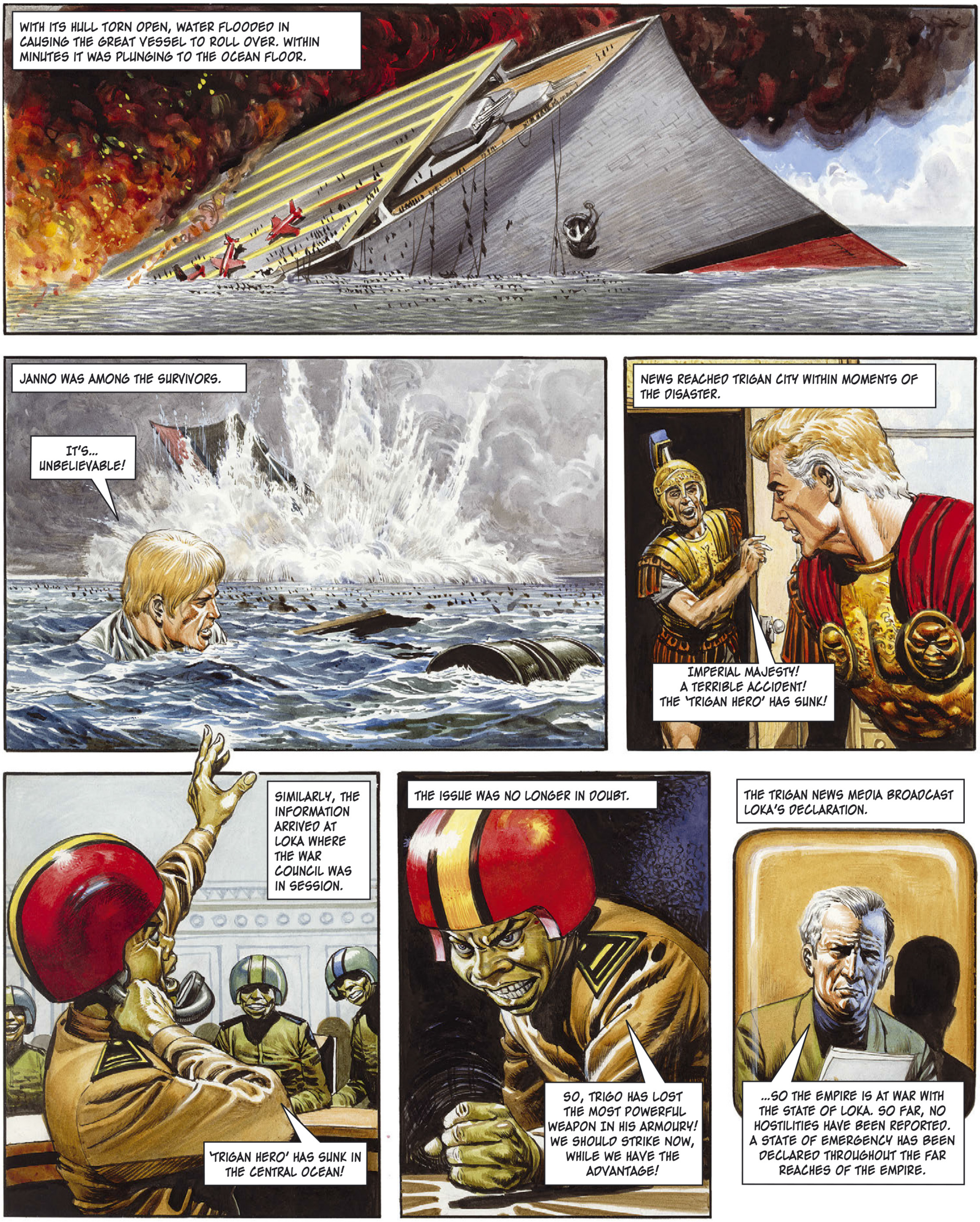
THE BARGAIN WAS MADE.
I WILL PAY YOU IN CASH!
I DON'T UNDERSTAND IT. YOU'VE MADE ME AN ENORMOUS PROFIT, BUT YOUR CHANCES OF WINNING WITH THAT TICKET ARE MILLIONS TO ONE.

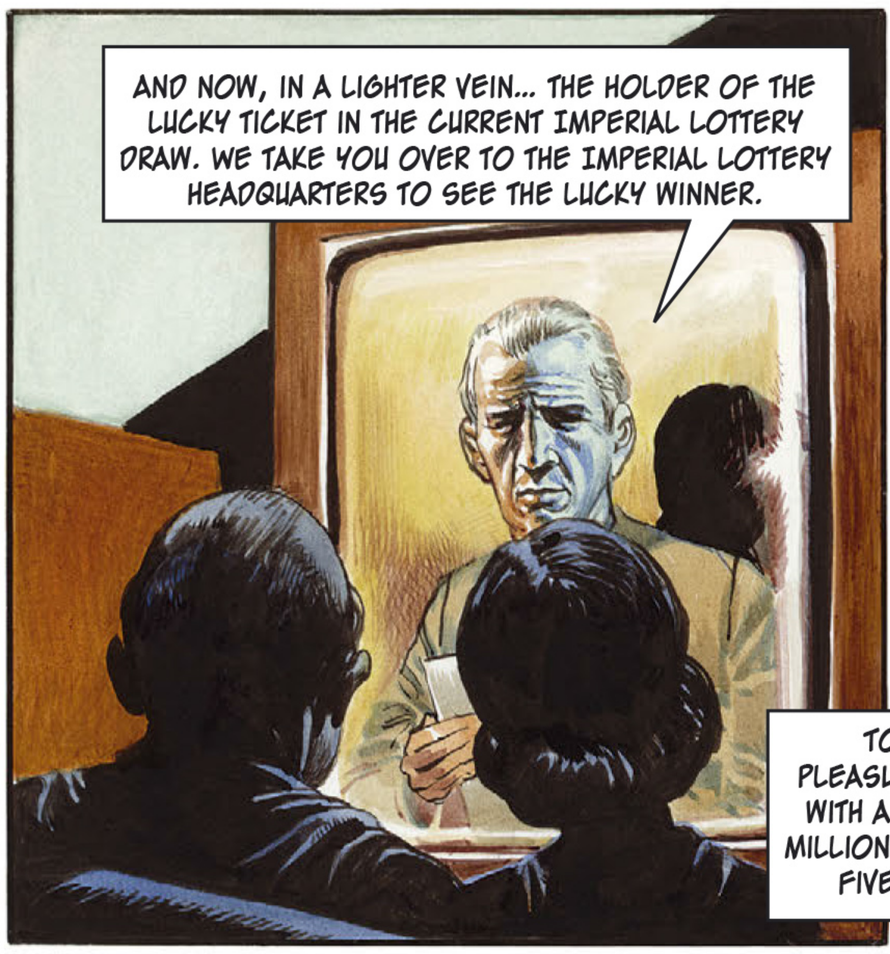
YOU CAN'T GO WRONG, ESPECIALLY WHEN YOU KNOW WHAT'S GOING TO HAPPEN IN THE FUTURE!


'TRIGAN HERO' REACHED THE GREAT CENTRAL OCEAN THE FOLLOWING DAY. TOWARDS SUNSET, ALARM BELLS RANG THROUGHOUT THE HUGE VESSEL. JANNO WAS JUST ABOUT TO CLIMB INTO HIS AIR CRAFT.
WHAT'S HAPPENED?

FIRE!
FIRE IN THE ENGINE ROOM!

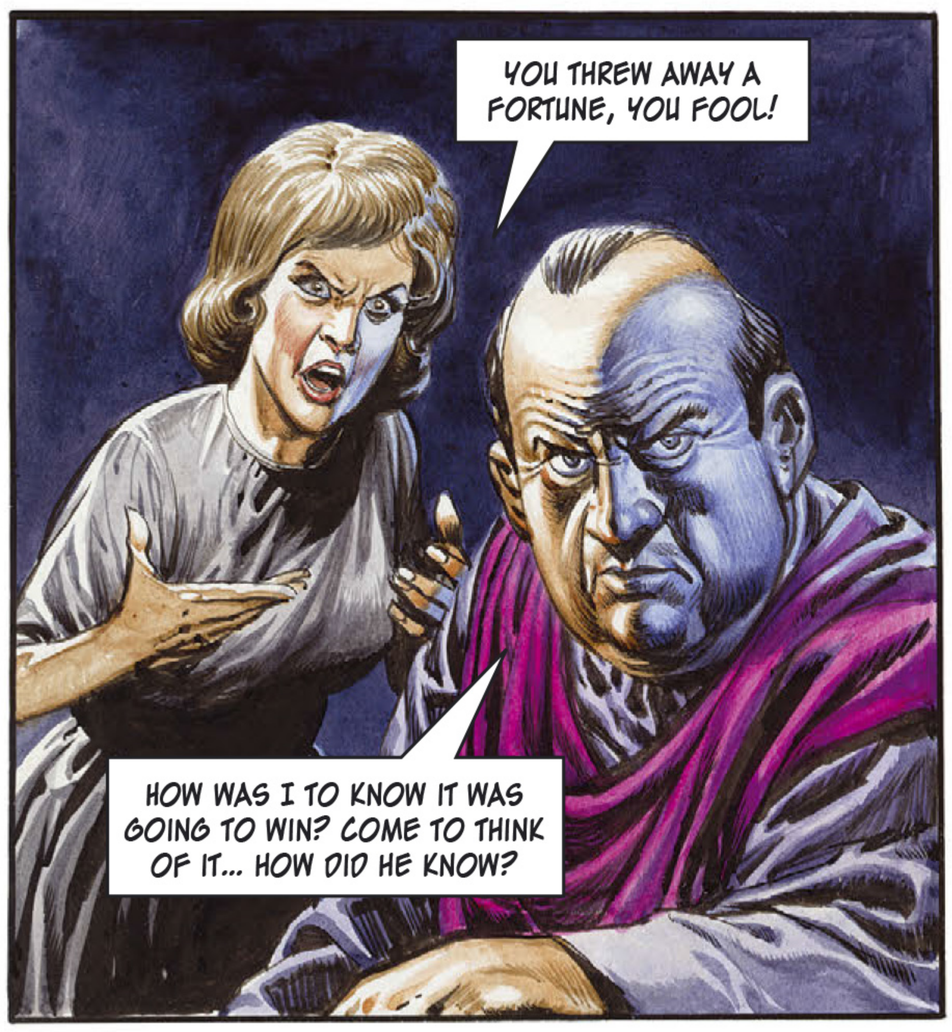
THE NEXT INSTANT, A TERRIBLE EXPLOSION SHOOK THE PRIDE OF THE TRIGAN FLEET!

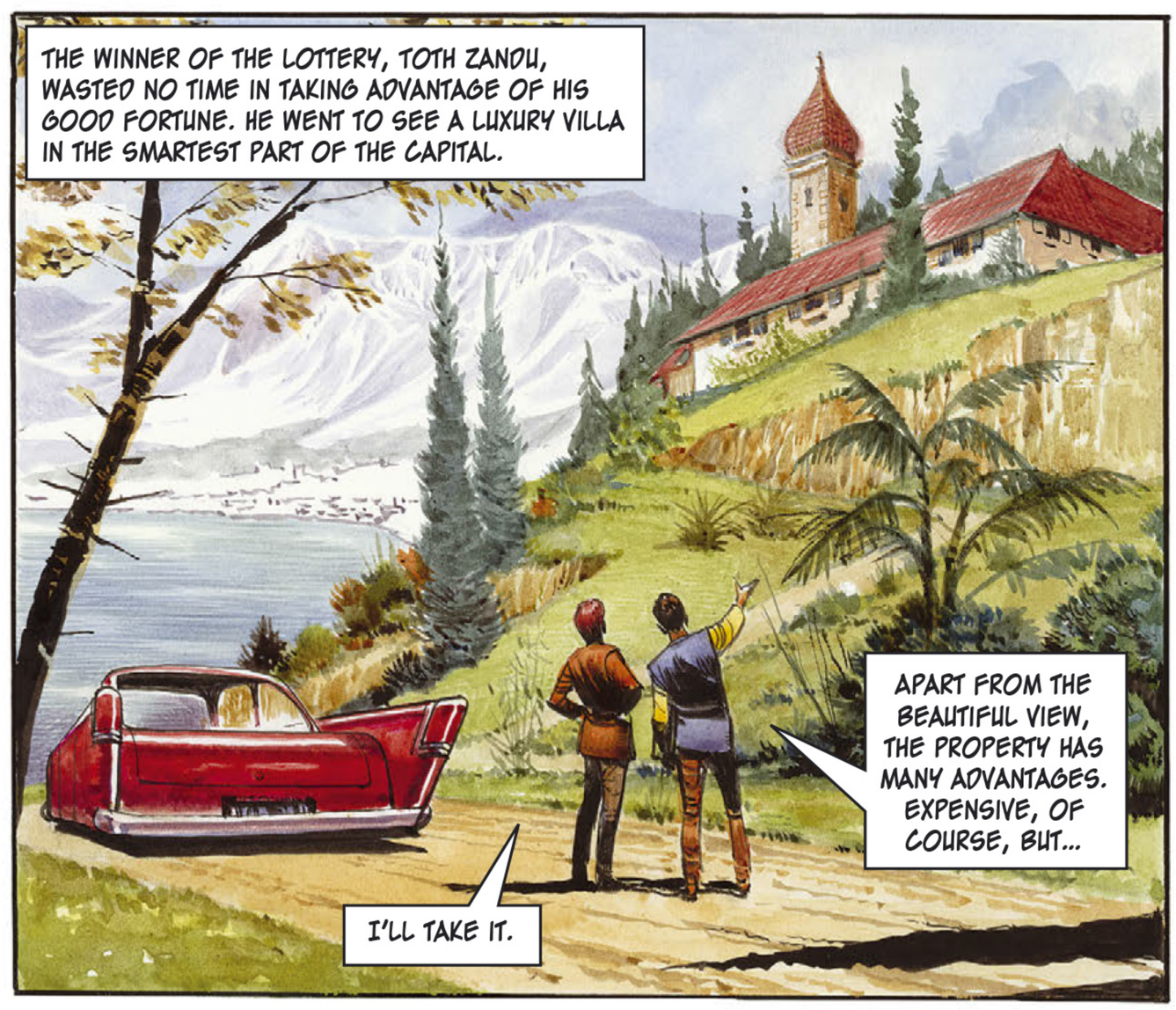

WITH ITS HULL TORN OPEN, WATER FLOODED IN CAUSING THE GREAT VESSEL TO ROLL OVER. WITHIN MINUTES IT WAS PLUNGING TO THE OCEAN FLOOR.
JANNO WAS AMONG THE SURVIVORS.
IT'S... UNBELIEVABLE!
NEWS REACHED TRIGAN CITY WITHIN MOMENTS OF THE DISASTER.
IMPERIAL MAJESTY! A TERRIBLE ACCIDENT! THE 'TRIGAN HERO' HAS SUNK!
SIMILARLY, THE INFORMATION ARRIVED AT LOKA WHERE THE WAR COUNCIL WAS IN SESSION.
'TRIGAN HERO' HAS SUNK IN THE CENTRAL OCEAN!
THE ISSUE WAS NO LONGER IN DOUBT.
SO, TRIGO HAS LOST THE MOST POWERFUL WEAPON IN HIS ARMOURY! WE SHOULD STRIKE NOW, WHILE WE HAVE THE ADVANTAGE!
THE TRIGAN NEWS MEDIA BROADCAST LOKA'S DECLARATION.
...SO THE EMPIRE IS AT WAR WITH THE STATE OF LOKA. SO FAR, NO HOSTILITIES HAVE BEEN REPORTED. A STATE OF EMERGENCY HAS BEEN DECLARED THROUGHOUT THE FAR REACHES OF THE EMPIRE.

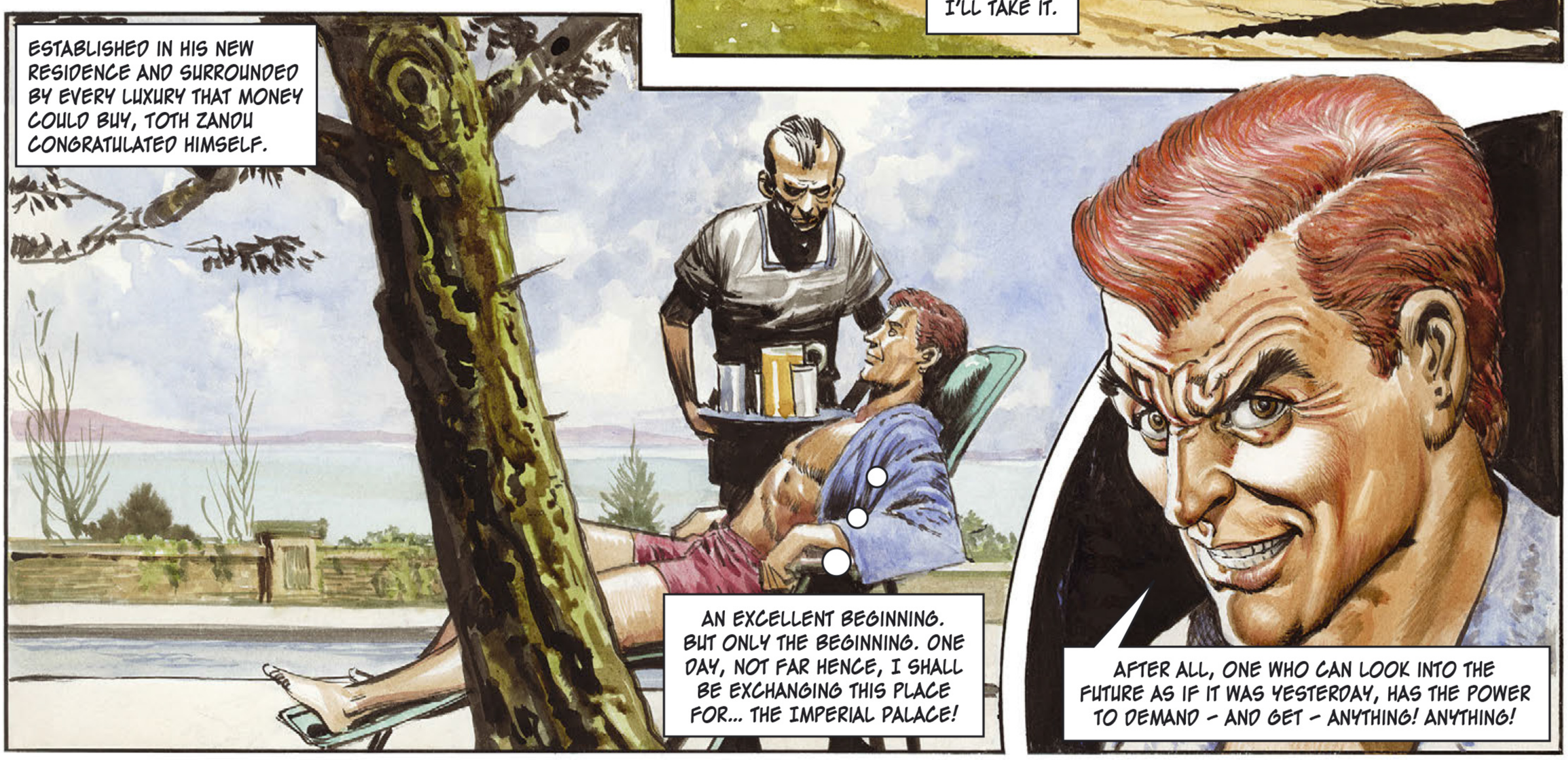

AND NOW, IN A LIGHTER VEIN... THE HOLDER OF THE LUCKY TICKET IN THE CURRENT IMPERIAL LOTTERY DRAW. WE TAKE YOU OVER TO THE IMPERIAL LOTTERY HEADQUARTERS TO SEE THE LUCKY WINNER.

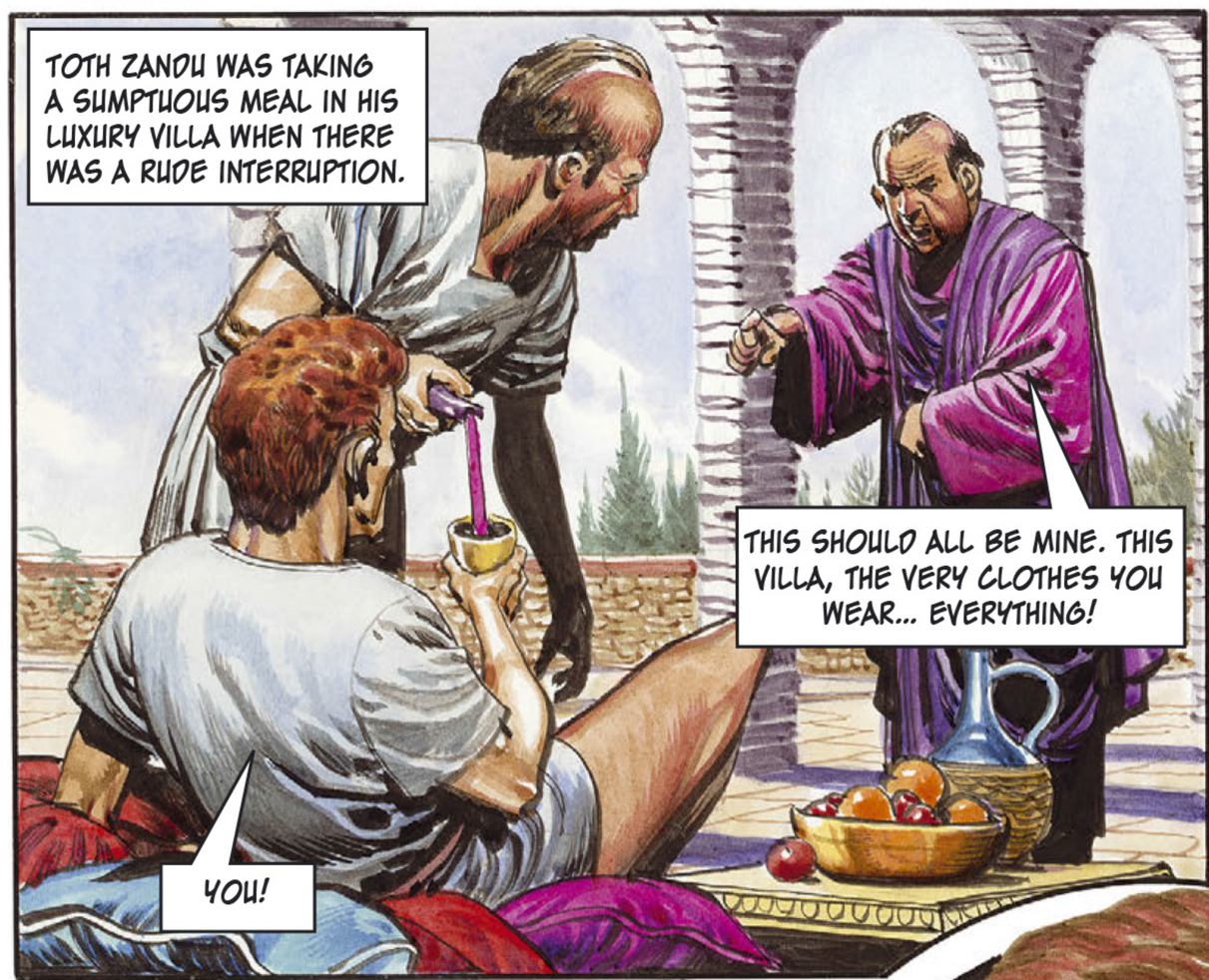
BEFORE THE ENVIOUS GAZE OF MILLIONS, THE RED-HEADED INDIVIDUAL BECAME A MULTI-MILLIONAIRE.
TOTH ZANDU, I HAVE PLEASURE IN PRESENTING YOU WITH A BANK DRAFT FOR TWO MILLION THULLARS AND TWENTY-FIVE THOUSAND ZERSTS.
I THANK YOU.

ONE VIEWER WAS MORE THAN ENVIOUS, HE WAS FURIOUS!
IT'S HIM! THE FELLOW WHO BOUGHT MY TICKET FROM ME FOR FIVE THOUSAND ZERSTS! AND THE TICKET WON!


YOU THREW AWAY A FORTUNE, YOU FOOL!
HOW WAS I TO KNOW IT WAS GOING TO WIN? COME TO THINK OF IT... HOW DID HE KNOW?


THE WINNER OF THE LOTTERY, TOTH ZANDU, WASTED NO TIME IN TAKING ADVANTAGE OF HIS GOOD FORTUNE. HE WENT TO SEE A LUXURY VILLA IN THE SMARTEST PART OF THE CAPITAL.
APART FROM THE BEAUTIFUL VIEW, THE PROPERTY HAS MANY ADVANTAGES. EXPENSIVE, OF COURSE, BUT...
I'LL TAKE IT.


ESTABLISHED IN HIS NEW RESIDENCE AND SURROUNDED BY EVERY LUXURY THAT MONEY COULD BUY, TOTH ZANDU CONGRATULATED HIMSELF.
AN EXCELLENT BEGINNING. BUT ONLY THE BEGINNING. ONE DAY, NOT FAR HENCE, I SHALL BE EXCHANGING THIS PLACE FOR... THE IMPERIAL PALACE!
AFTER ALL, ONE WHO CAN LOOK INTO THE FUTURE AS IF IT WAS YESTERDAY, HAS THE POWER TO DEMAND - AND GET - ANYTHING! ANYTHING!


TOTH ZANDU WAS TAKING A SUMPTUOUS MEAL IN HIS LUXURY VILLA WHEN THERE WAS A RUDE INTERRUPTION.
YOU!
THIS SHOULD ALL BE MINE. THIS VILLA, THE VERY CLOTHES YOU WEAR... EVERYTHING!

IT WAS THE MAN FROM WHOM TOTH HAD QUITE FAIRLY BOUGHT THE FATEFUL LOTTERY TICKET THAT HAD WON THE FORTUNE.
HELP! A MADMAN IS TRYING TO SLAY THE MASTER!
YOU CHEATED ME! I DEMAND MY RIGHTS!
YOU HAVE NO RIGHTS, FOOL!

THE INTRUDER WAS SEIZED AND DRAGGED AWAY.
I'LL HAVE MY REVENGE!
THROW THIS ANIMAL OUT! IF HE SHOWS HIS FACE AGAIN, GIVE HIM A GOOD BEATING!

HOW NICE TO KNOW THAT ONE IS SAFE FROM THAT FELLOW'S MAD JEALOUSY. AND NOW, IT'S TIME FOR ME TO VISIT – AND ASTONISH – THE IMPERIAL WAR COUNCIL!

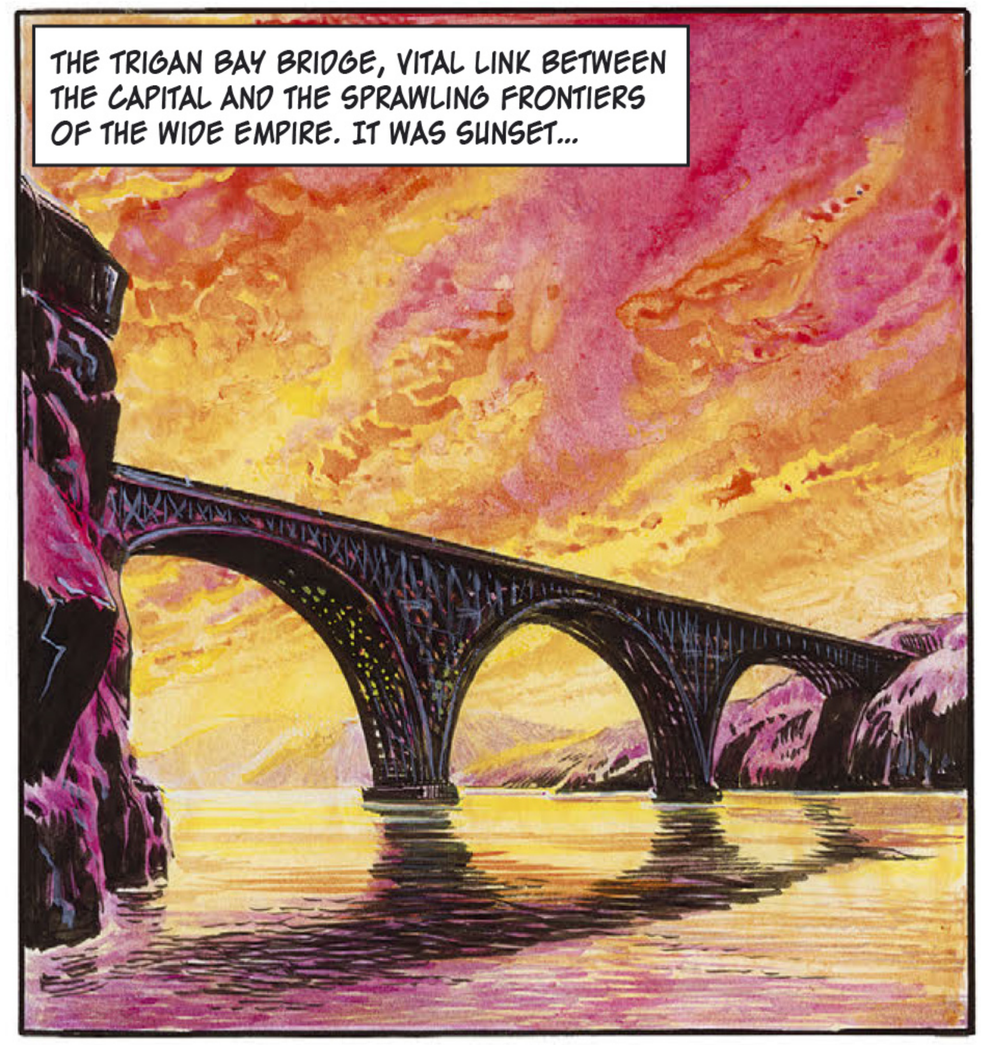
THE EMPIRE BEING IN A STATE OF WAR WITH LOKA, BUT NO SHOTS HAVING YET BEEN FIRED, TRIGAN'S LEADERS WERE PLANNING THEIR FIRST MOVE, WHEN...
A CERTAIN TOTH ZANDU BEGS A HEARING, GENERAL. HE SAYS HE HAS INSIDE INFORMATION OF AN IMMINENT ENEMY ATTACK!
THEN BRING HIM IN.

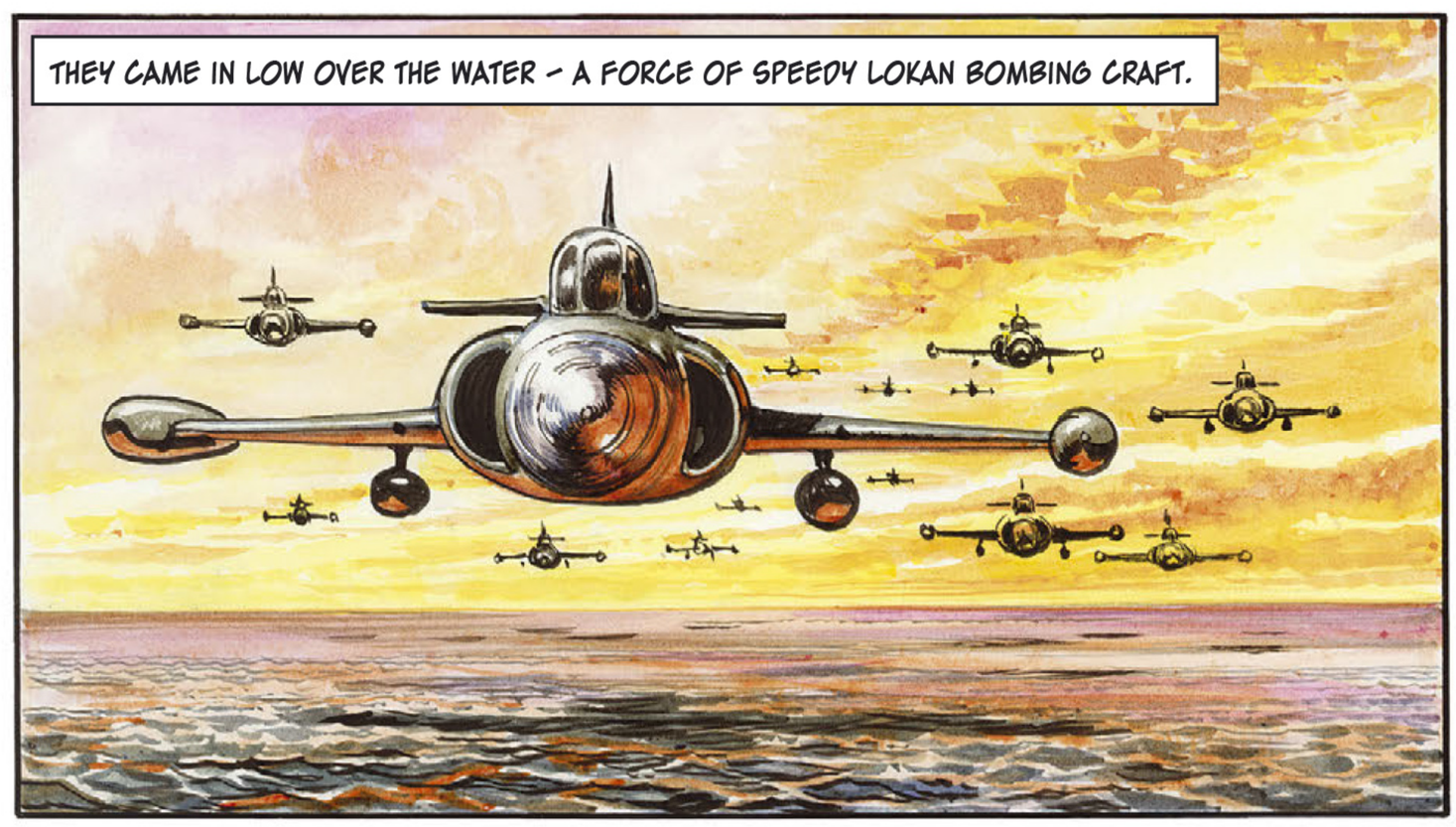
WELL, FELLOW? WHAT'S THIS INFORMATION AND WHERE DID YOU GET IT FROM?
I WILL NOT REVEAL THE SOURCE OF MY INFORMATION, BUT YOU WILL IGNORE IT AT YOUR PERIL.

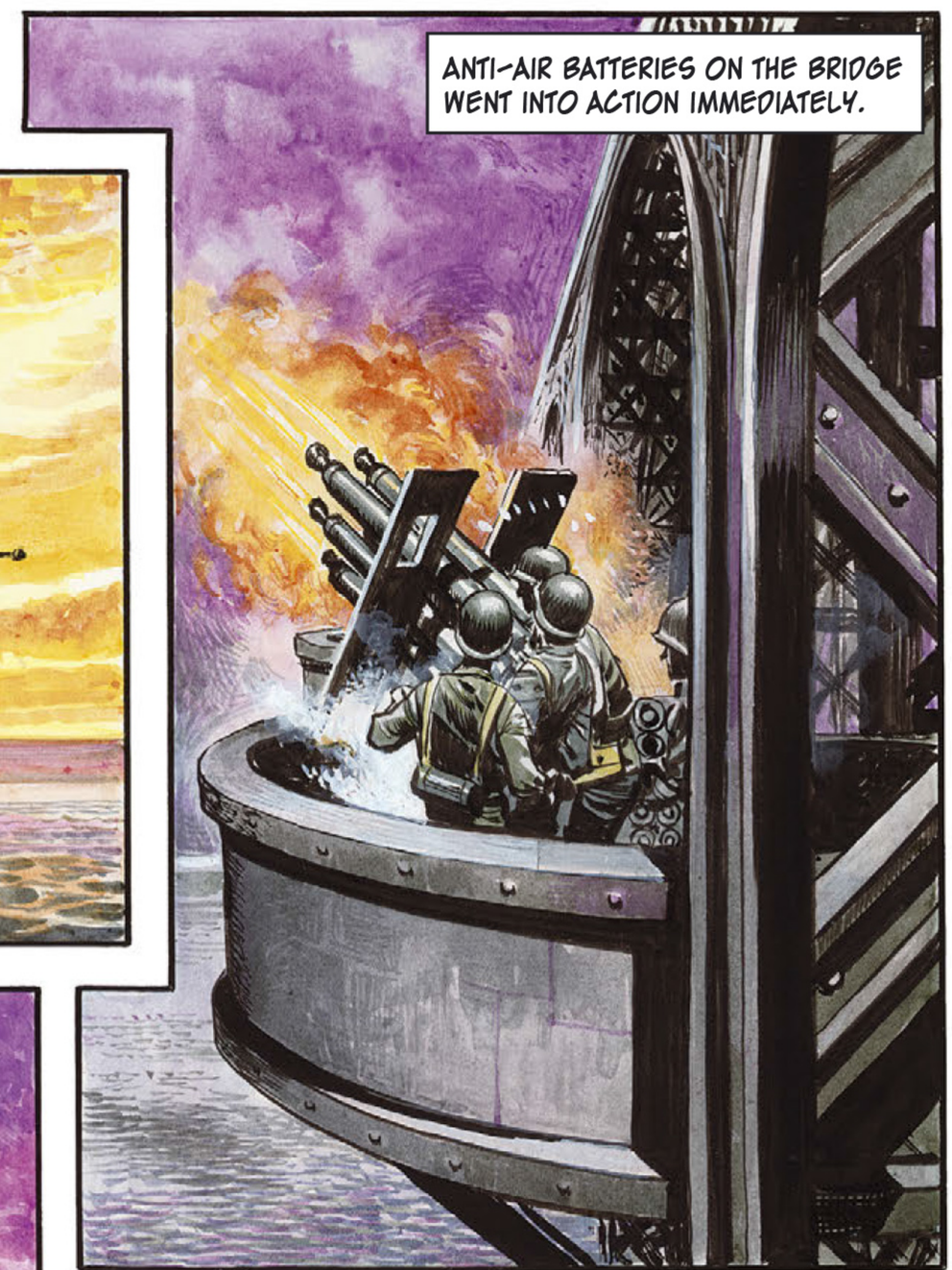
TONIGHT, AT SUNDOWN, A LARGE FORCE OF LOKAN BOMBING CRAFT WILL ATTACK TRIGAN BAY BRIDGE, HERE. HOWEVER, THANKS TO MY INFORMATION, YOU WILL HAVE A LARGE FORCE OF FIGHTING CRAFT IN WAIT FOR THEM AND THE LOKAN FORCE WILL BE ENTIRELY DESTROYED!

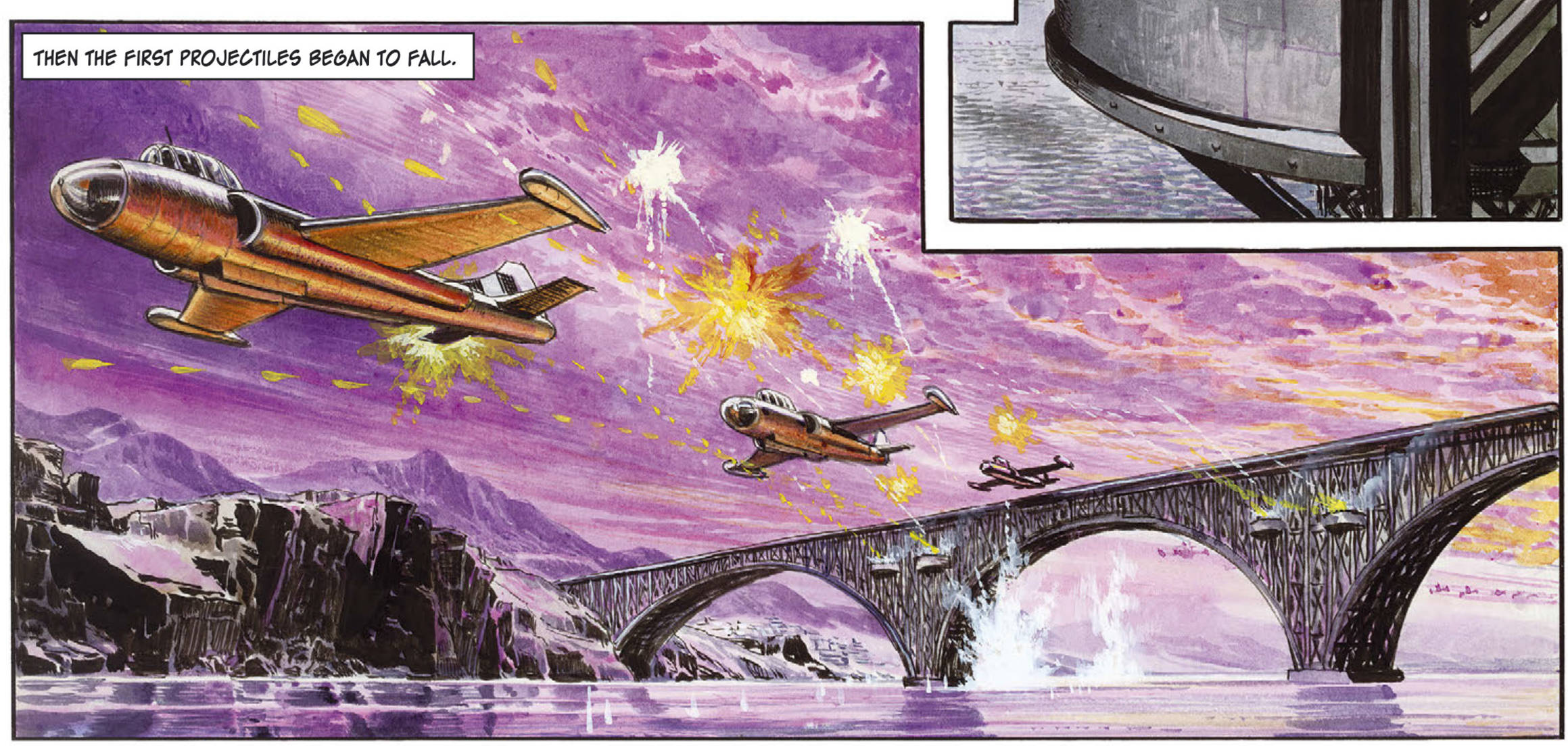
YOU THINK WE WOULD MOVE A LARGE FORCE OF FIGHTING CRAFT AT YOUR INSTRUCTION?
I KNOW YOU WILL.
YOU KNOW? HOW DO YOU KNOW?

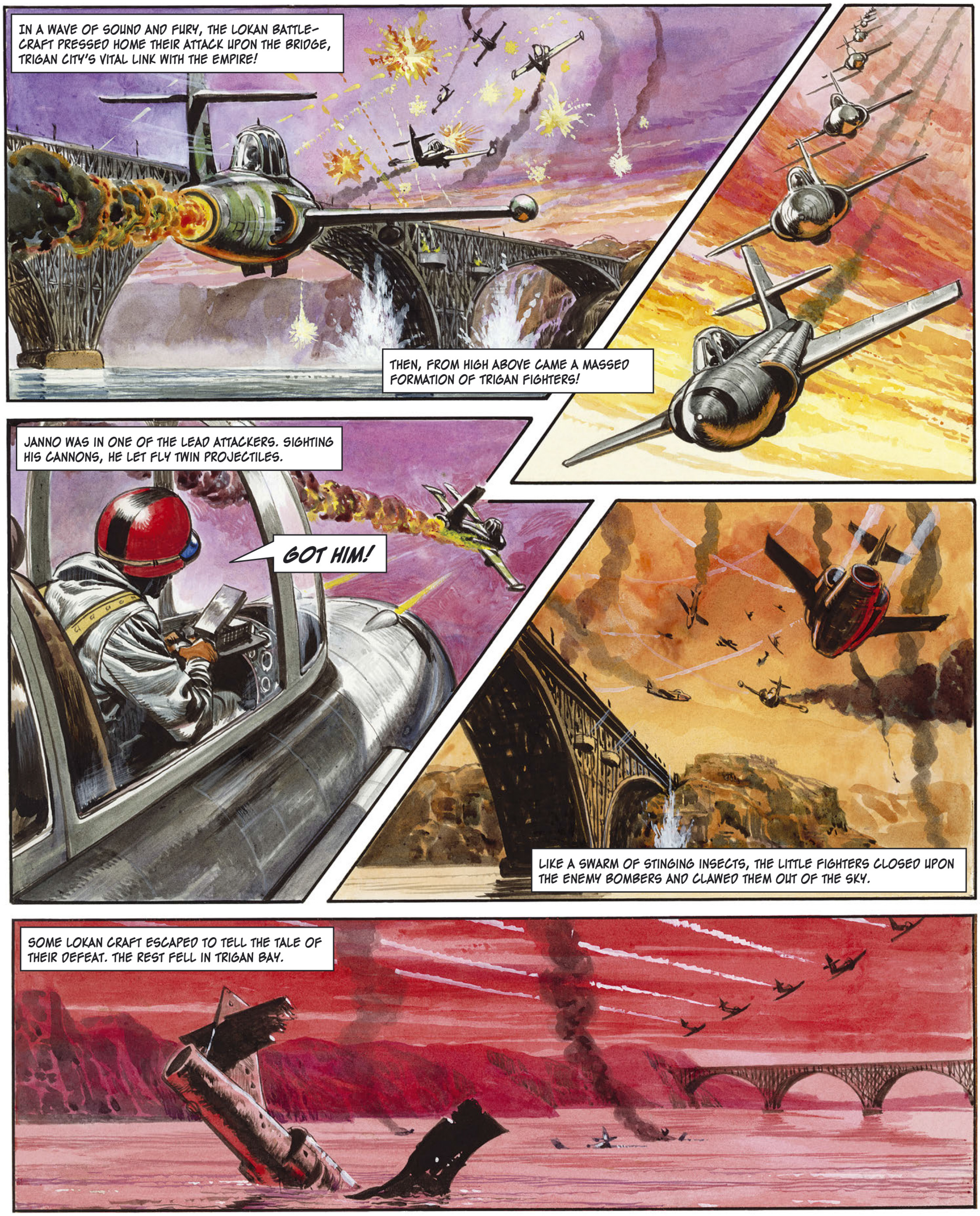
IT WAS AT THAT MOMENT THAT THE EMPEROR TRIGO ENTERED THE COUNCIL ROOM.
WHAT'S ALL THE EXCITEMENT, GENERAL?
THIS MADMAN, IMPERIAL MAJESTY, IS BABBLING ABOUT A LOKAN ATTACK. WE ARE JUST ABOUT TO HAVE HIM THROWN OUT.

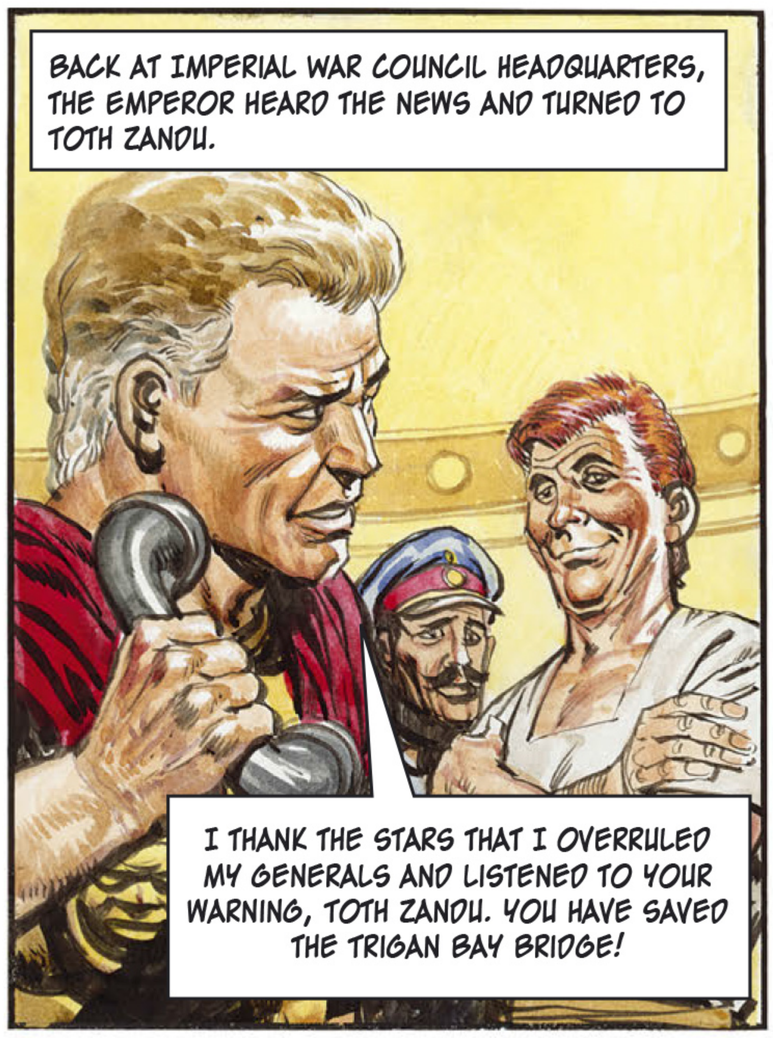

THE TRIGAN BAY BRIDGE, VITAL LINK BETWEEN THE CAPITAL AND THE SPRAWLING FRONTIERS OF THE WIDE EMPIRE. IT WAS SUNSET...

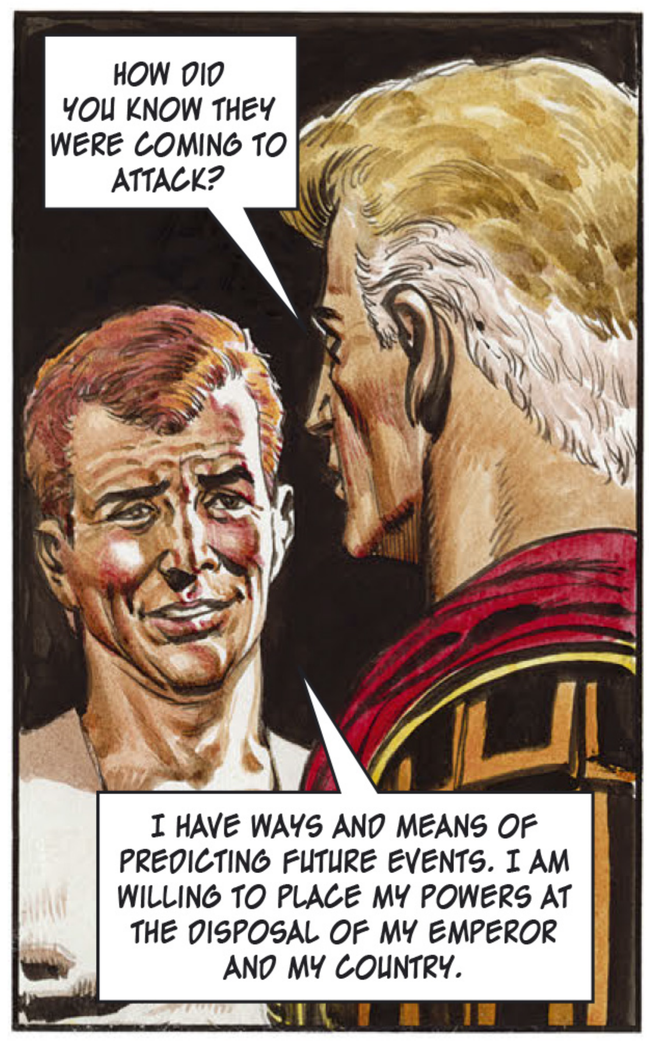

THEY CAME IN LOW OVER THE WATER – A FORCE OF SPEEDY LOKAN BOMBING CRAFT.


ANTI-AIR BATTERIES ON THE BRIDGE WENT INTO ACTION IMMEDIATELY.

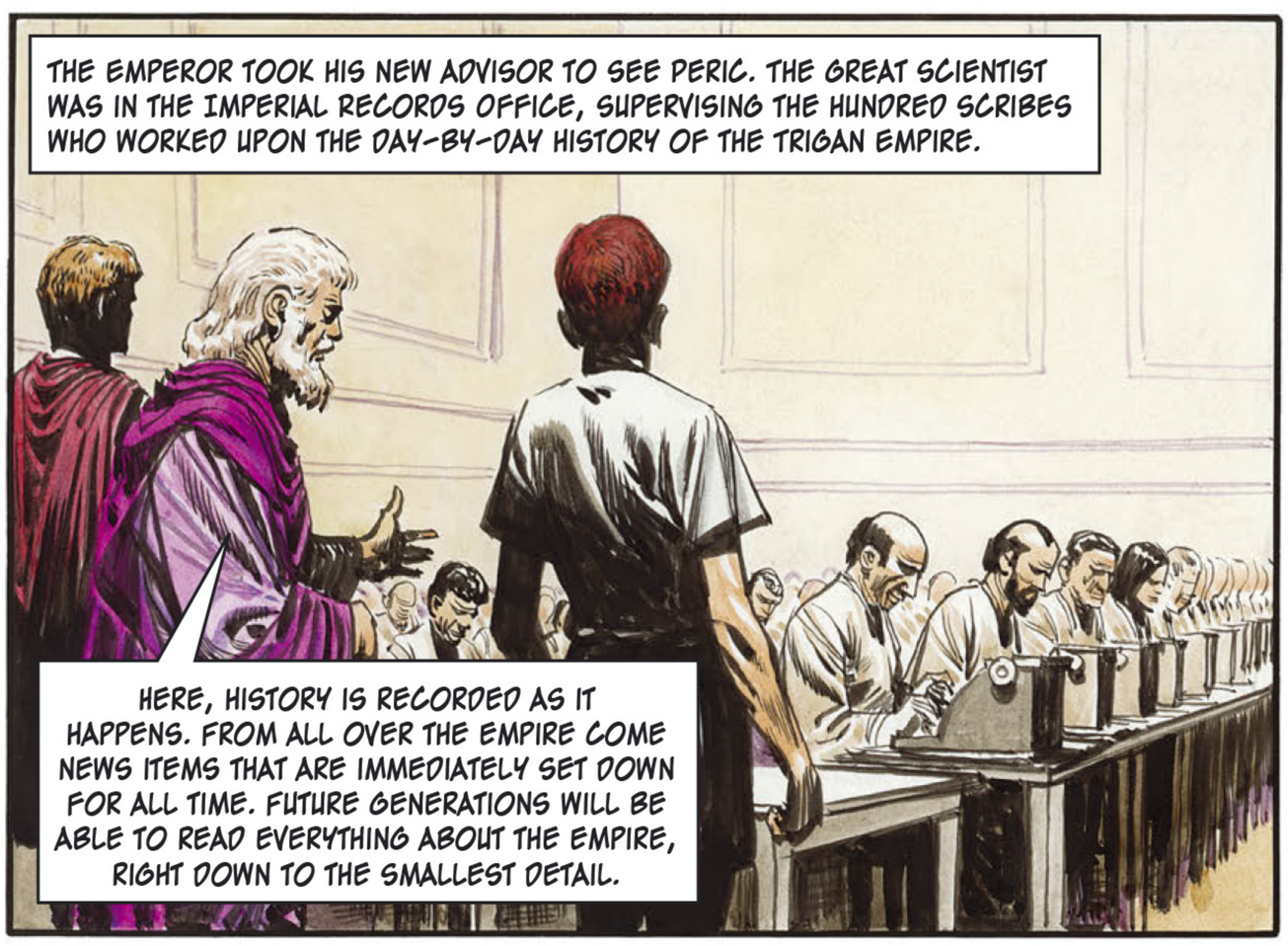

THEN THE FIRST PROJECTILES BEGAN TO FALL.

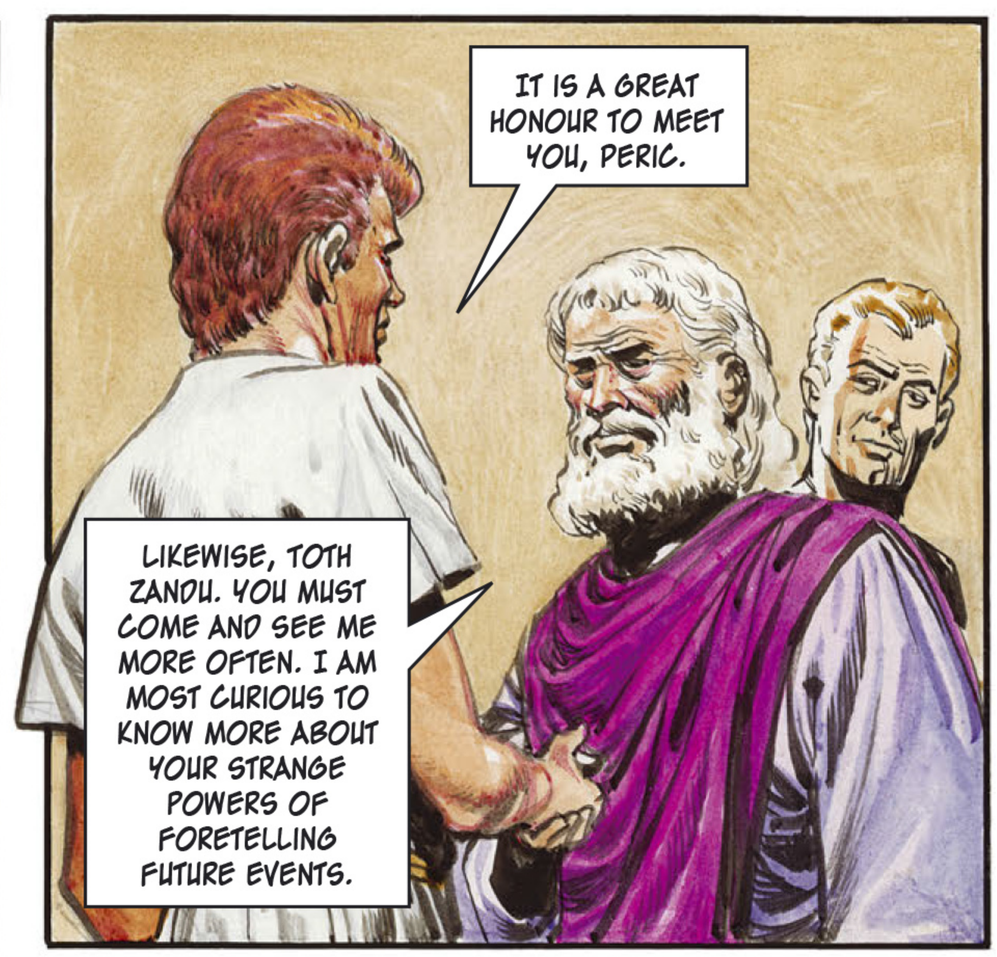

IN A WAVE OF SOUND AND FURY, THE LOKAN BATTLE-CRAFT PRESSED HOME THEIR ATTACK UPON THE BRIDGE, TRIGAN CITY'S VITAL LINK WITH THE EMPIRE!
THEN, FROM HIGH ABOVE CAME A MASSED FORMATION OF TRIGAN FIGHTERS!
JANNO WAS IN ONE OF THE LEAD ATTACKERS. SIGHTING HIS CANNONS, HE LET FLY TWIN PROJECTILES.
GOT HIM!
LIKE A SWARM OF STINGING INSECTS, THE LITTLE FIGHTERS CLOSED UPON THE ENEMY BOMBERS AND CLAWED THEM OUT OF THE SKY.
SOME LOKAN CRAFT ESCAPED TO TELL THE TALE OF THEIR DEFEAT. THE REST FELL IN TRIGAN BAY.

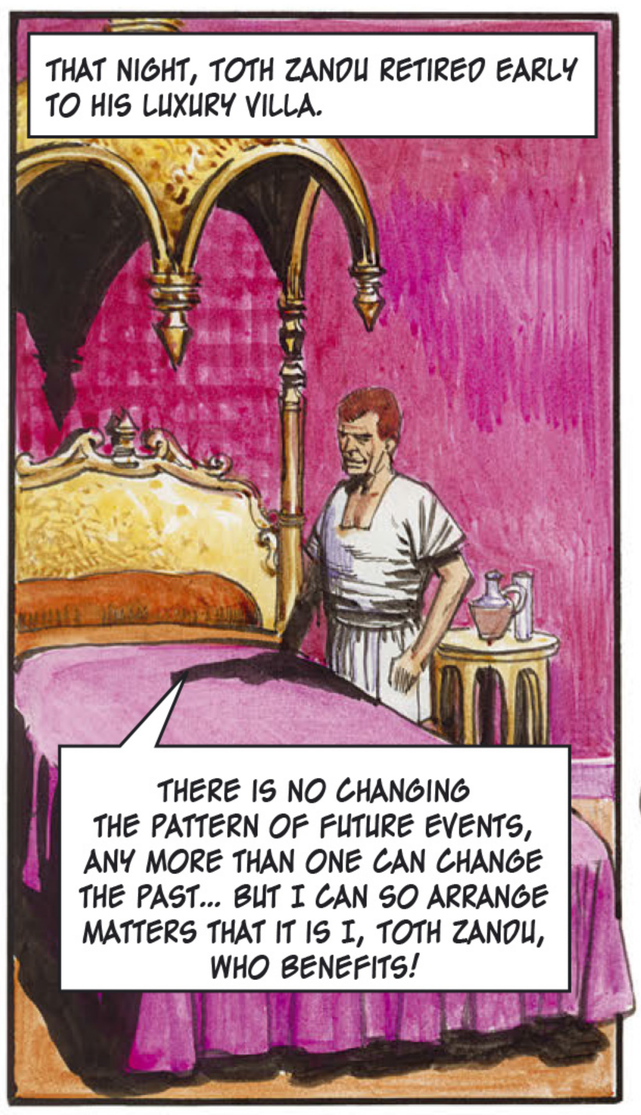

BACK AT IMPERIAL WAR COUNCIL HEADQUARTERS, THE EMPEROR HEARD THE NEWS AND TURNED TO TOTH ZANDU.
I THANK THE STARS THAT I OVERRULED MY GENERALS AND LISTENED TO YOUR WARNING, TOTH ZANDU. YOU HAVE SAVED THE TRIGAN BAY BRIDGE!


HOW DID YOU KNOW THEY WERE COMING TO ATTACK?
I HAVE WAYS AND MEANS OF PREDICTING FUTURE EVENTS. I AM WILLING TO PLACE MY POWERS AT THE DISPOSAL OF MY EMPEROR AND MY COUNTRY.

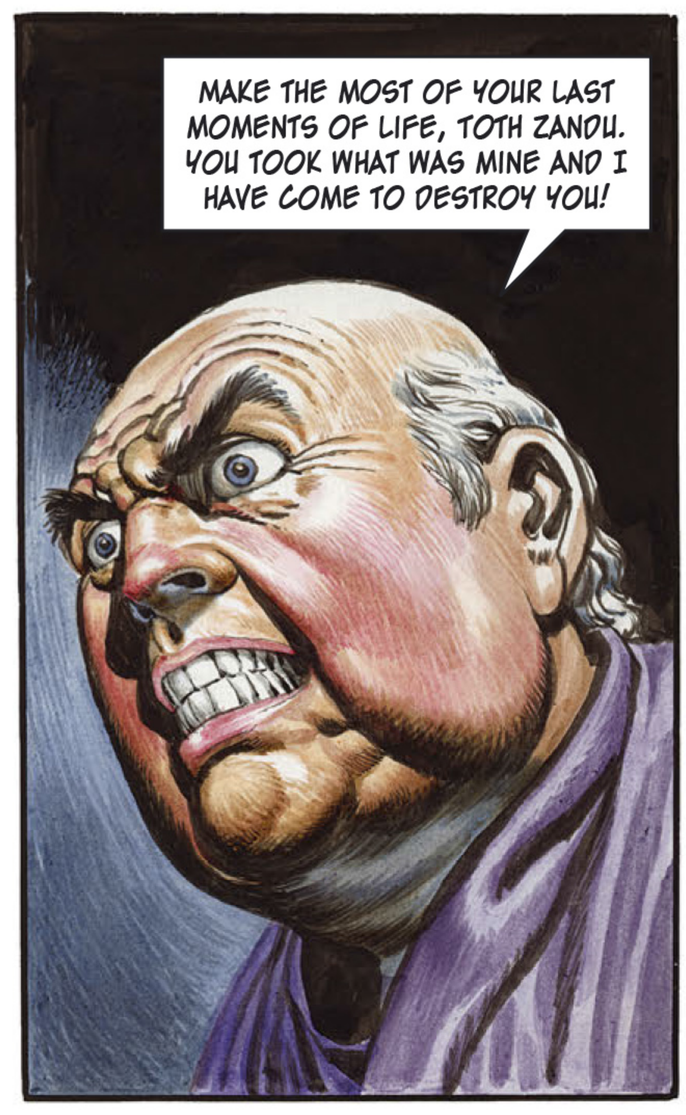
I HEREBY APPOINT TOTH ZANDU ADVISOR EXTRAORDINARY TO THE IMPERIAL WAR COUNCIL. IN MY ABSENCE, YOU WILL GIVE CAREFUL CONSIDERATION TO HIS PREDICTIONS.
AS YOUR IMPERIAL MAJESTY COMMANDS!

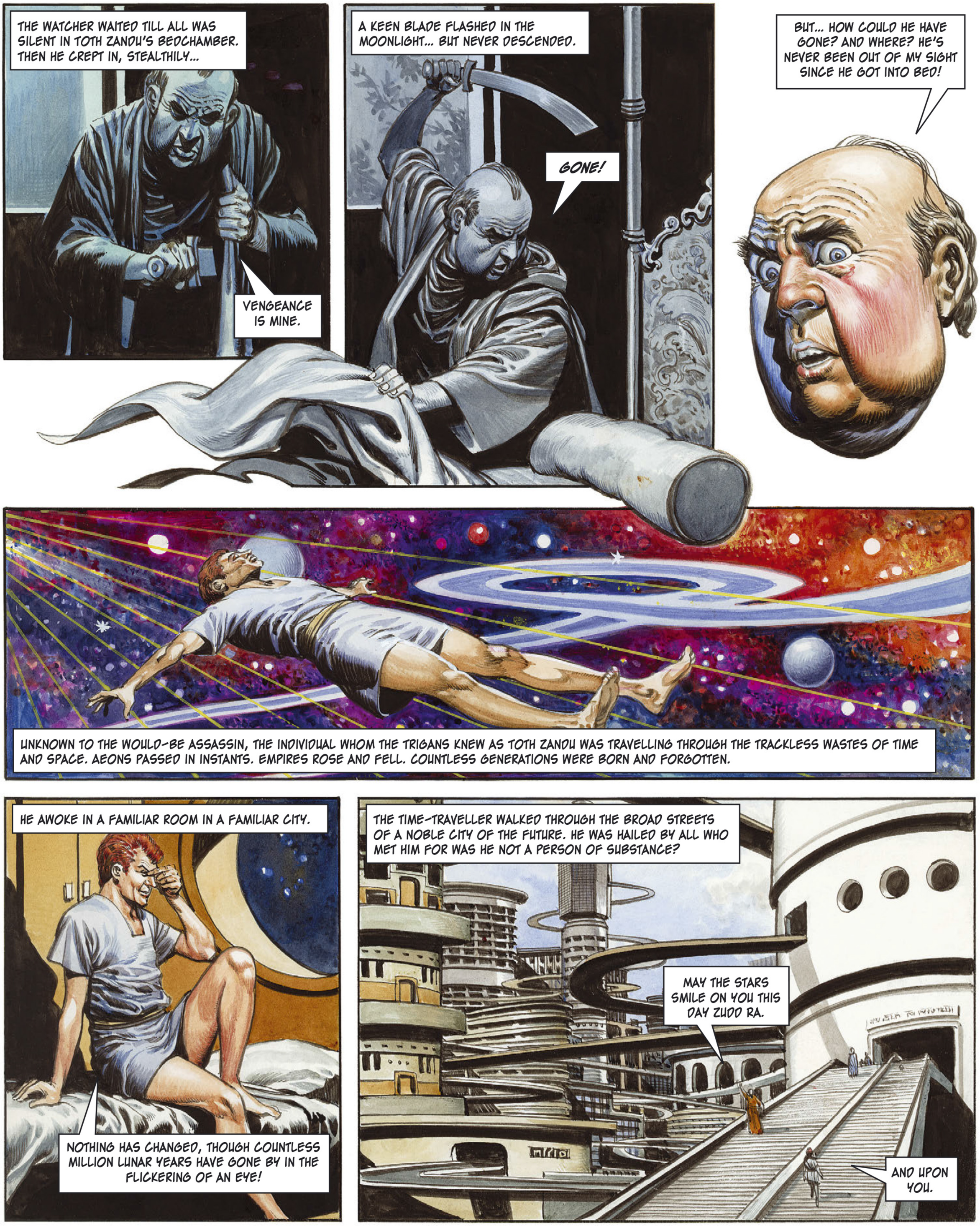

THE EMPEROR TOOK HIS NEW ADVISOR TO SEE PERIC. THE GREAT SCIENTIST WAS IN THE IMPERIAL RECORDS OFFICE, SUPERVISING THE HUNDRED SCRIBES WHO WORKED UPON THE DAY-BY-DAY HISTORY OF THE TRIGAN EMPIRE.
HERE, HISTORY IS RECORDED AS IT HAPPENS. FROM ALL OVER THE EMPIRE COME NEWS ITEMS THAT ARE IMMEDIATELY SET DOWN FOR ALL TIME. FUTURE GENERATIONS WILL BE ABLE TO READ EVERYTHING ABOUT THE EMPIRE, RIGHT DOWN TO THE SMALLEST DETAIL.

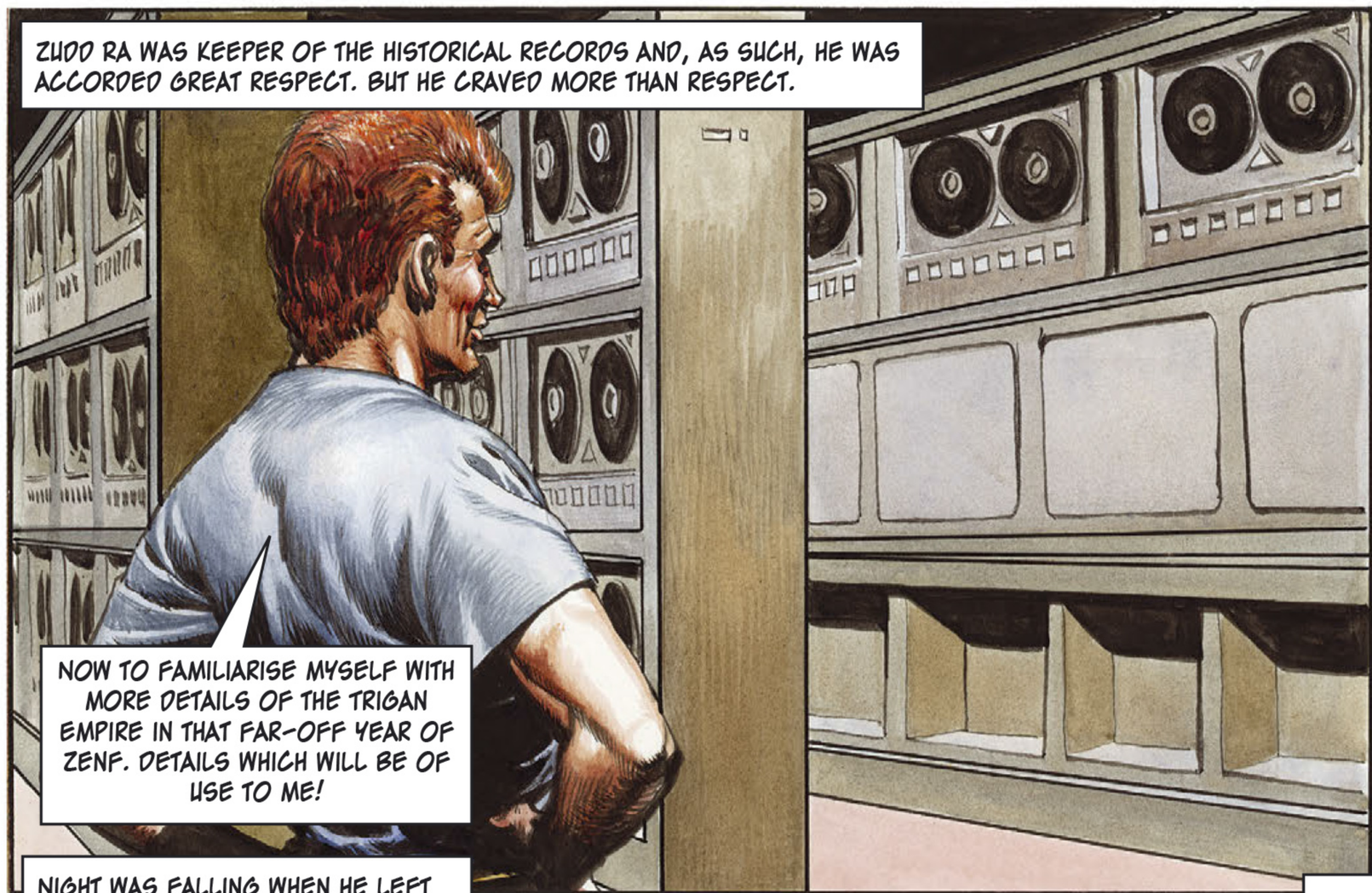

IT IS A GREAT HONOUR TO MEET YOU, PERIC.
LIKEWISE, TOTH ZANDU. YOU MUST COME AND SEE ME MORE OFTEN. I AM MOST CURIOUS TO KNOW MORE ABOUT YOUR STRANGE POWERS OF FORETELLING FUTURE EVENTS.

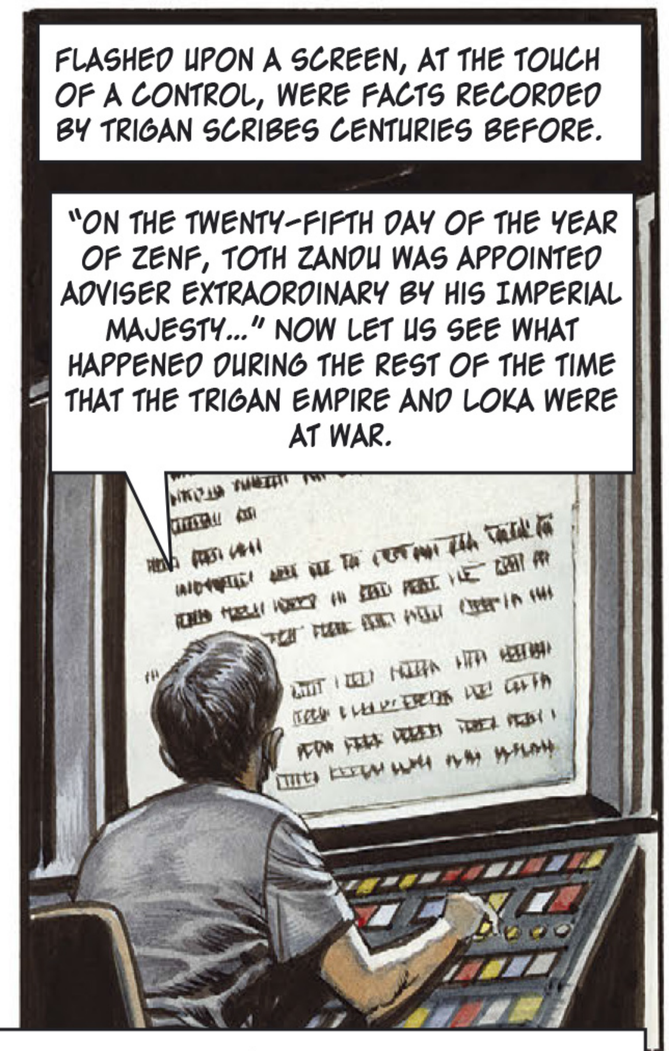

THAT NIGHT, TOTH ZANDU RETIRED EARLY TO HIS LUXURY VILLA.
THERE IS NO CHANGING THE PATTERN OF FUTURE EVENTS, ANY MORE THAN ONE CAN CHANGE THE PAST... BUT I CAN SO ARRANGE MATTERS THAT IT IS I, TOTH ZANDU, WHO BENEFITS!

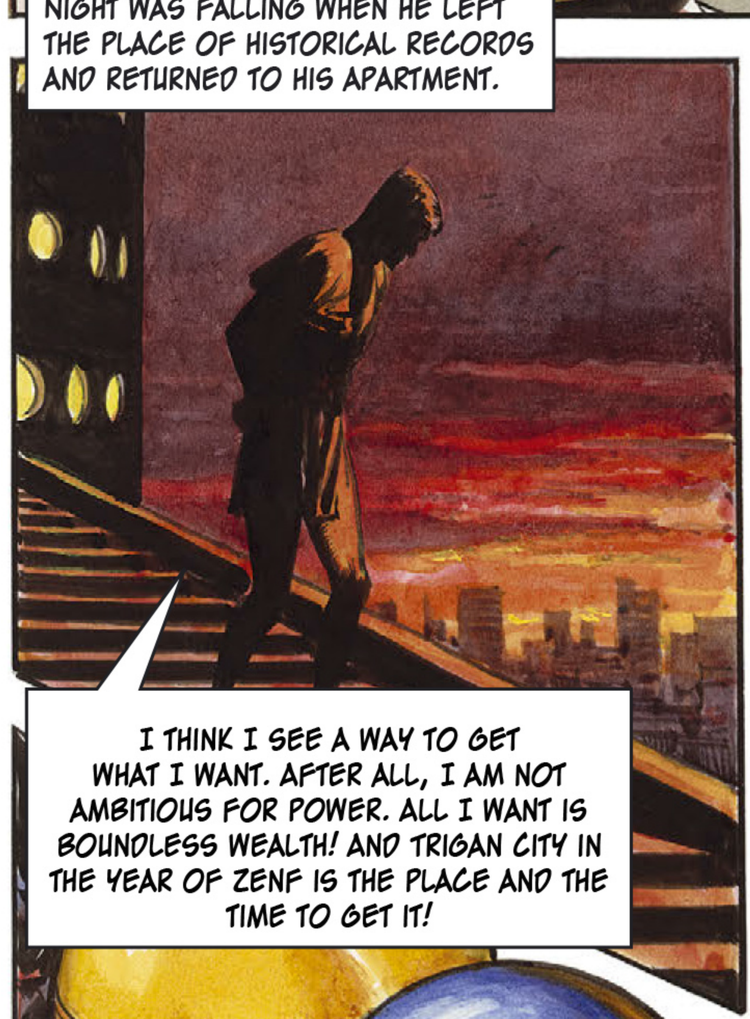
HE POURED A FLASK OF STRANGE-LOOKING LIQUID.
ONE SIP OF THIS STRANGE CHEMICAL AND I'LL SOON BE TRAVELLING THROUGH SPACE AND TIME.

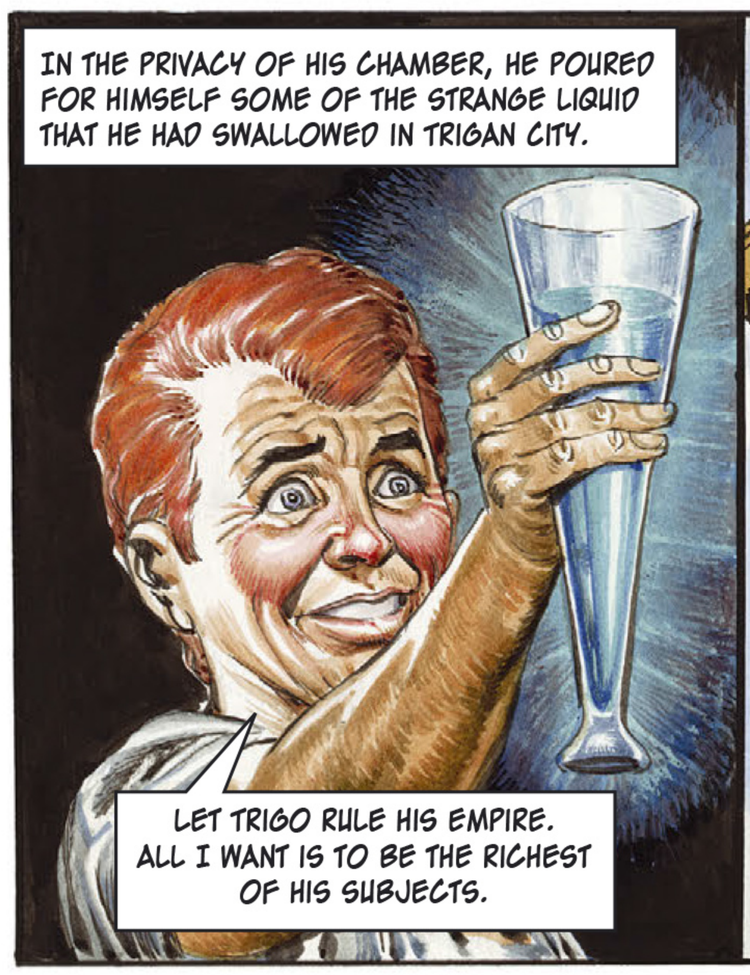

MAKE THE MOST OF YOUR LAST MOMENTS OF LIFE, TOTH ZANDU. YOU TOOK WHAT WAS MINE AND I HAVE COME TO DESTROY YOU!

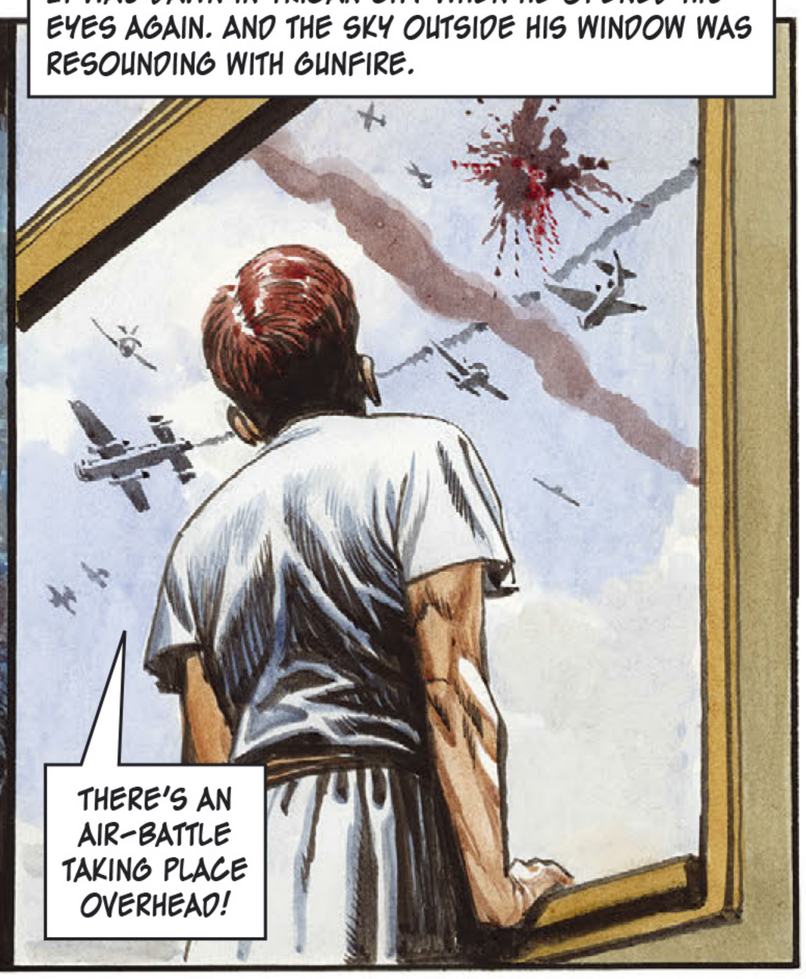

THE WATCHER WAITED TILL ALL WAS SILENT IN TOTH ZANDU'S BEDCHAMBER. THEN HE CREPT IN, STEALTHILY...
VENGEANCE IS MINE.
A KEEN BLADE FLASHED IN THE MOONLIGHT... BUT NEVER DESCENDED.
GONE!
BUT... HOW COULD HE HAVE GONE? AND WHERE? HE'S NEVER BEEN OUT OF MY SIGHT SINCE HE GOT INTO BED!
UNKNOWN TO THE WOULD-BE ASSASSIN, THE INDIVIDUAL WHOM THE TRIGANS KNEW AS TOTH ZANDU WAS TRAVELLING THROUGH THE TRACKLESS WASTES OF TIME AND SPACE. AEONS PASSED IN INSTANTS. EMPIRES ROSE AND FELL. COUNTLESS GENERATIONS WERE BORN AND FORGOTTEN.
HE AWOKE IN A FAMILIAR ROOM IN A FAMILIAR CITY.
NOTHING HAS CHANGED, THOUGH COUNTLESS MILLION LUNAR YEARS HAVE GONE BY IN THE FLICKERING OF AN EYE!
THE TIME-TRAVELLER WALKED THROUGH THE BROAD STREETS OF A NOBLE CITY OF THE FUTURE. HE WAS HAILED BY ALL WHO MET HIM FOR WAS HE NOT A PERSON OF SUBSTANCE?
MAY THE STARS SMILE ON YOU THIS DAY ZUDO RA.
AND UPON YOU.

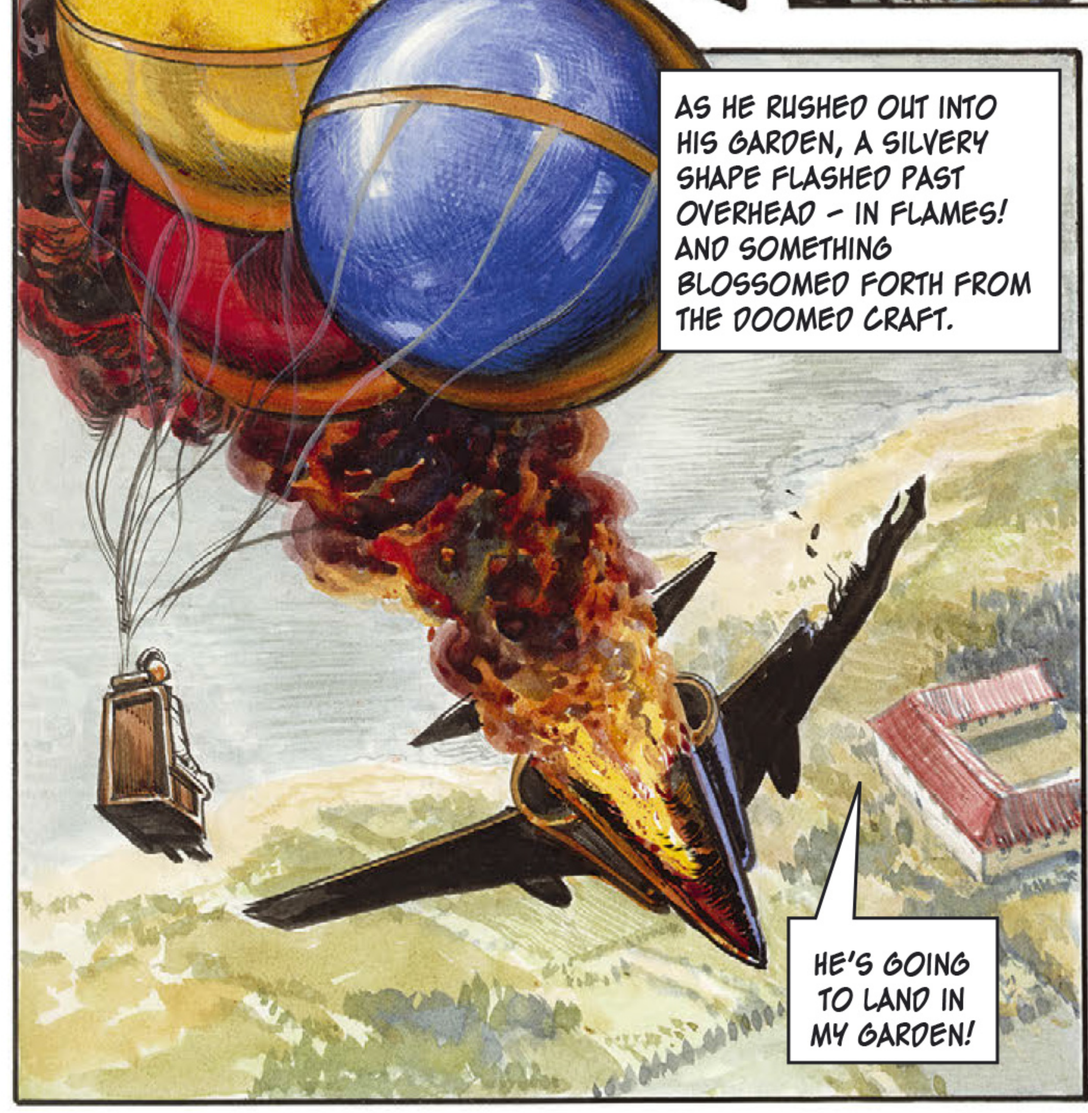

ZUDO RA WAS KEEPER OF THE HISTORICAL RECORDS AND, AS SUCH, HE WAS ACCORDED GREAT RESPECT. BUT HE CRAVED MORE THAN RESPECT.
NOW TO FAMILIARISE MYSELF WITH MORE DETAILS OF THE TRIGAN EMPIRE IN THAT FAR-OFF YEAR OF ZENF. DETAILS WHICH WILL BE OF USE TO ME!


FLASHED UPON A SCREEN, AT THE TOUCH OF A CONTROL, WERE FACTS RECORDED BY TRIGAN SCRIBES CENTURIES BEFORE.
"ON THE TWENTY-FIFTH DAY OF THE YEAR OF ZENF, TOTH ZANDU WAS APPOINTED ADVISER EXTRAORDINARY BY HIS IMPERIAL MAJESTY..." NOW LET US SEE WHAT HAPPENED DURING THE REST OF THE TIME THAT THE TRIGAN EMPIRE AND LOKA WERE AT WAR.


NIGHT WAS FALLING WHEN HE LEFT THE PLACE OF HISTORICAL RECORDS AND RETURNED TO HIS APARTMENT.
I THINK I SEE A WAY TO GET WHAT I WANT. AFTER ALL, I AM NOT AMBITIOUS FOR POWER. ALL I WANT IS BOUNDLESS WEALTH! AND TRIGAN CITY IN THE YEAR OF ZENF IS THE PLACE AND THE TIME TO GET IT!


IN THE PRIVACY OF HIS CHAMBER, HE POURED FOR HIMSELF SOME OF THE STRANGE LIQUID THAT HE HAD SWALLOWED IN TRIGAN CITY.
LET TRIGO RULE HIS EMPIRE. ALL I WANT IS TO BE THE RICHEST OF HIS SUBJECTS.


IT WAS DAWN IN TRIGAN CITY WHEN HE OPENED HIS EYES AGAIN. AND THE SKY OUTSIDE HIS WINDOW WAS RESOUNDING WITH GUNFIRE.
THERE'S AN AIR-BATTLE TAKING PLACE OVERHEAD!


AS HE RUSHED OUT INTO HIS GARDEN, A SILVERY SHAPE FLASHED PAST OVERHEAD - IN FLAMES! AND SOMETHING BLOSSOMED FORTH FROM THE DOOMED CRAFT.
HE'S GOING TO LAND IN MY GARDEN!

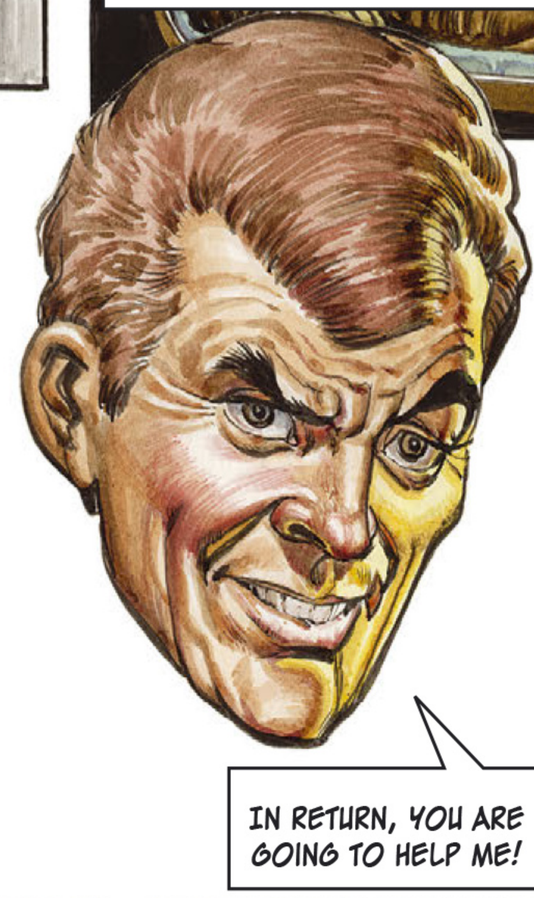
TOTH ZANDU WAS LEFT IN NO DOUBT ABOUT THE PILOT'S NATIONALITY WHEN HE RUSHED FORWARD TO HIS ASSISTANCE.
DO AS I ORDER, TRIGAN... OR PERISH!

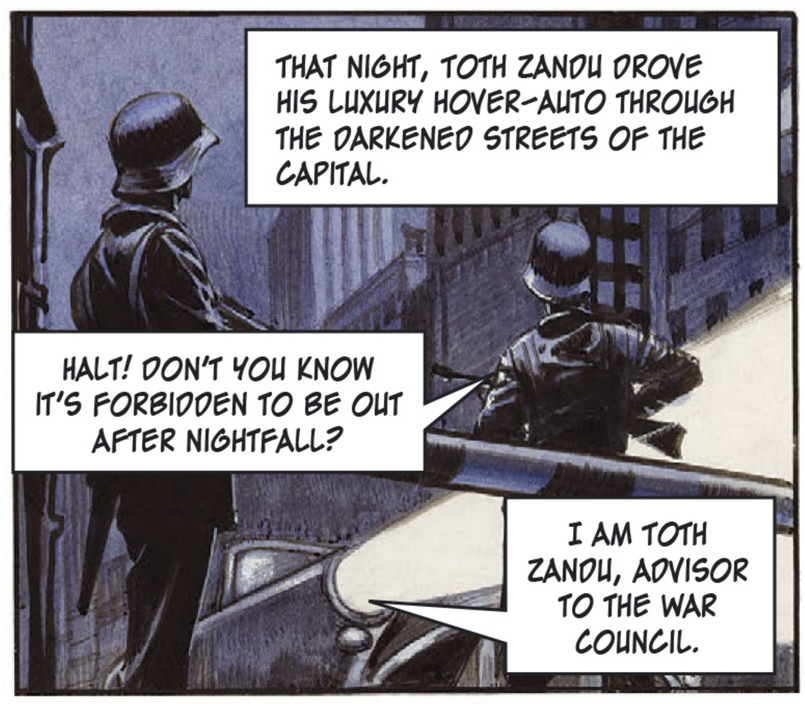
AS THE LOKAN STRUGGLED UPRIGHT, HE GAVE A CRY OF PAIN...
UUUUUH!

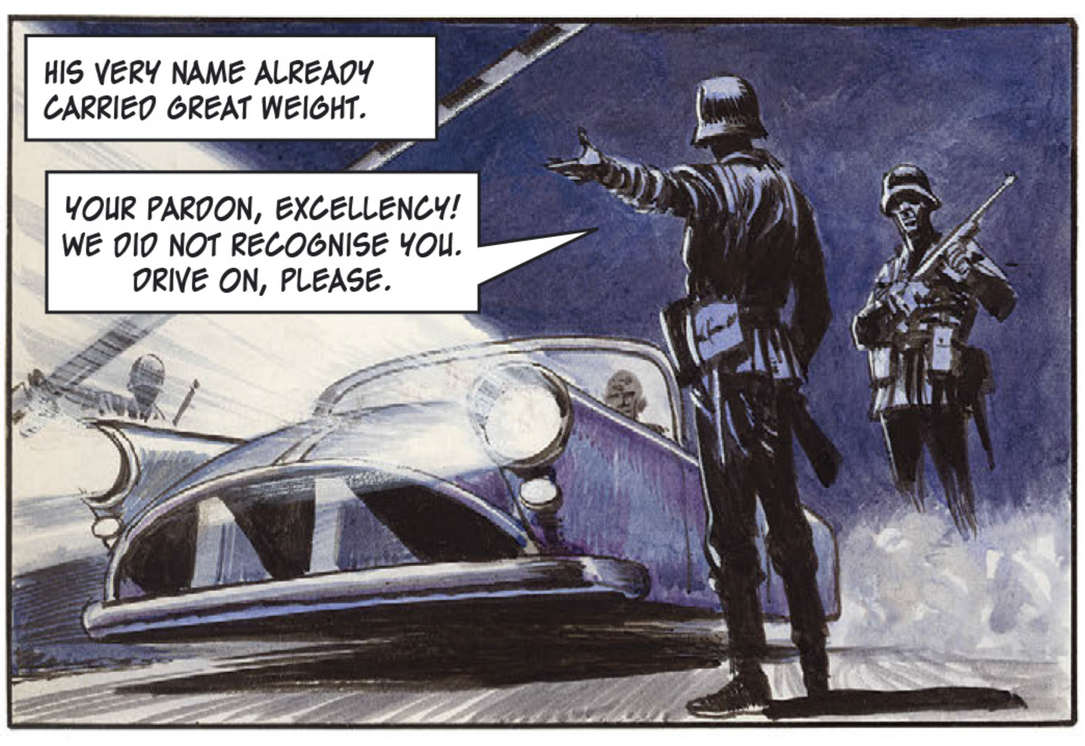
... AND CRUMPLED AT TOTH ZANDU'S FEET.
THIS GIVES ME A GREAT IDEA!
LATER, WHEN THE PILOT OPENED HIS EYES, TOTH ZANDU WAS TENDING HIS WOUNDED LEG.

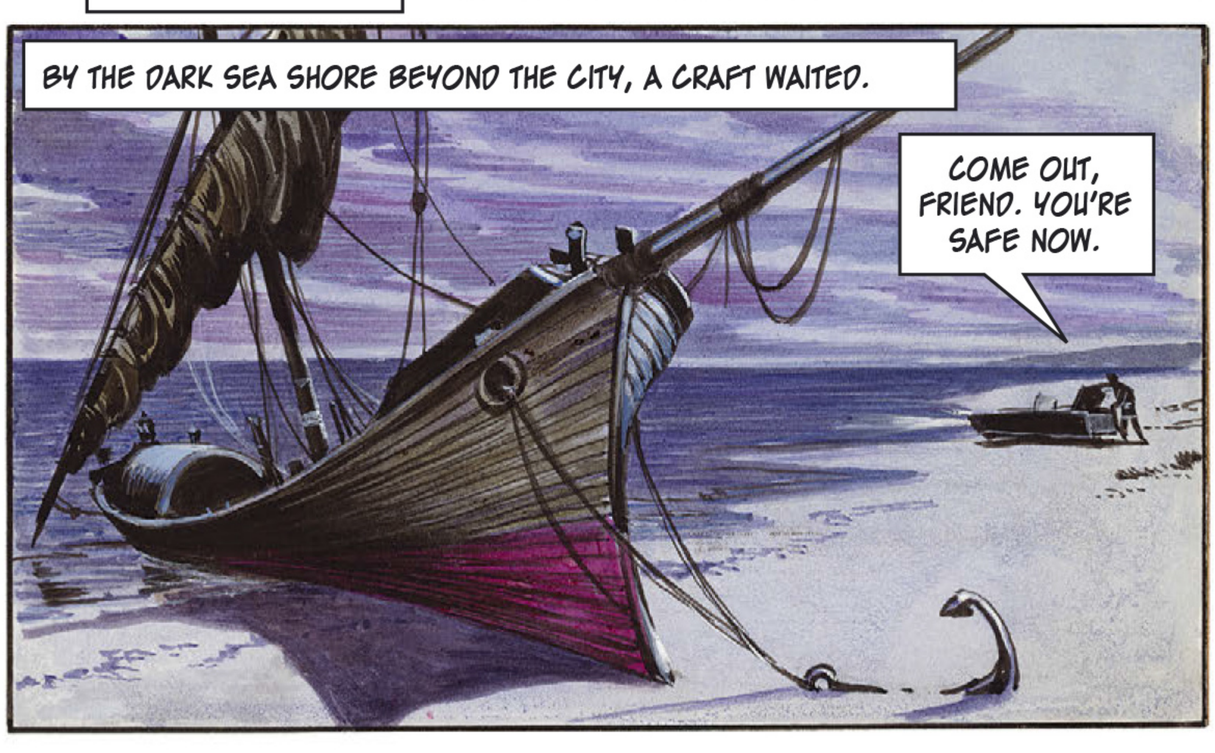
SO! YOU HAVE TURNED THE TABLES WHILE I WAS UNCONSCIOUS, TRIGAN ANIMAL!
NOT SO, MY FRIEND. YOUR FIREARM IS TUCKED INTO YOUR BELT, IF YOU FEEL YOU HAVE NEED OF IT.

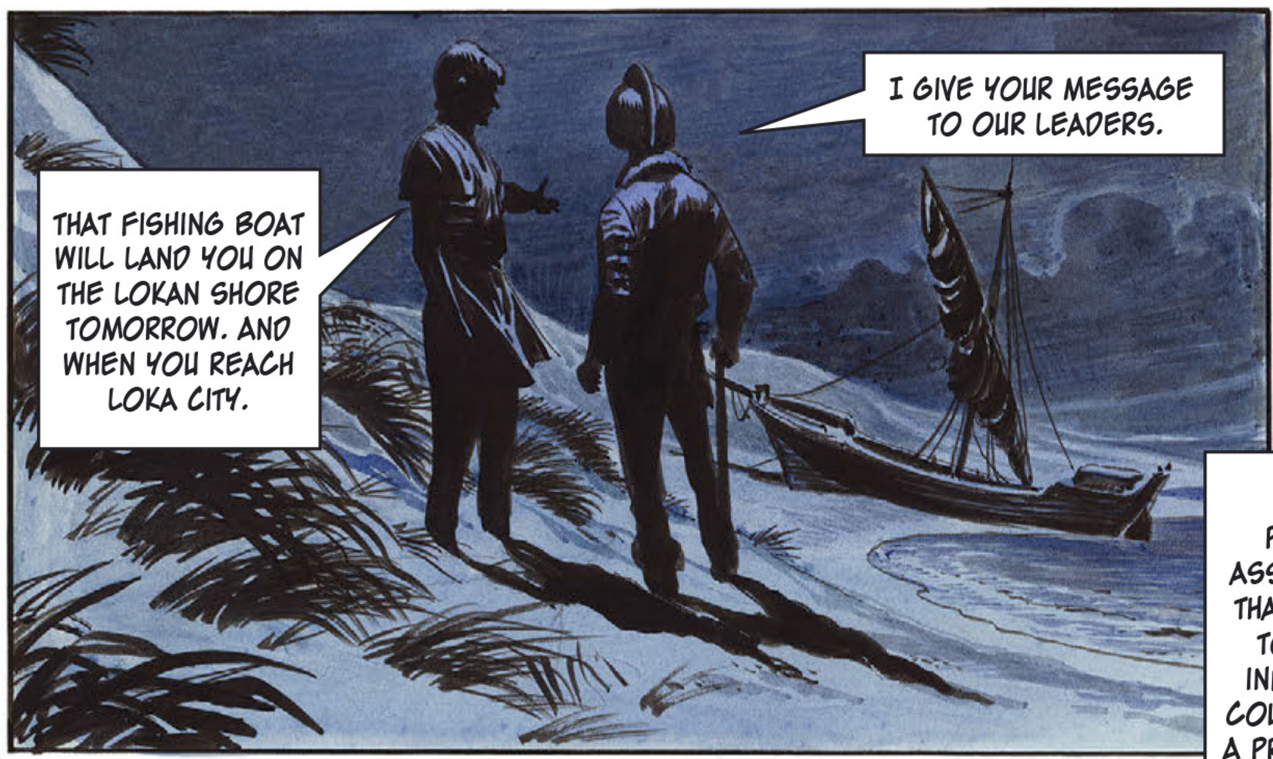
WHAT ARE YOU UP TO?
SIMPLE. I AM GOING TO HELP YOU ESCAPE BACK TO LOKA!

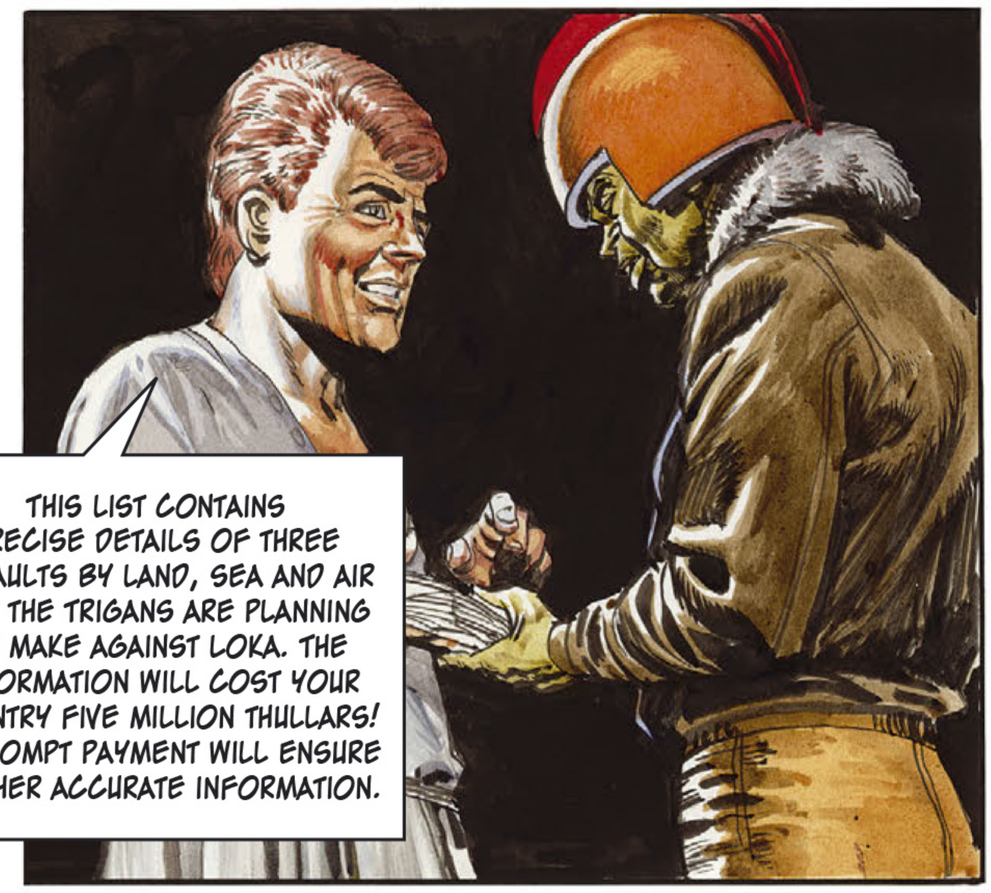

IN RETURN, YOU ARE GOING TO HELP ME!

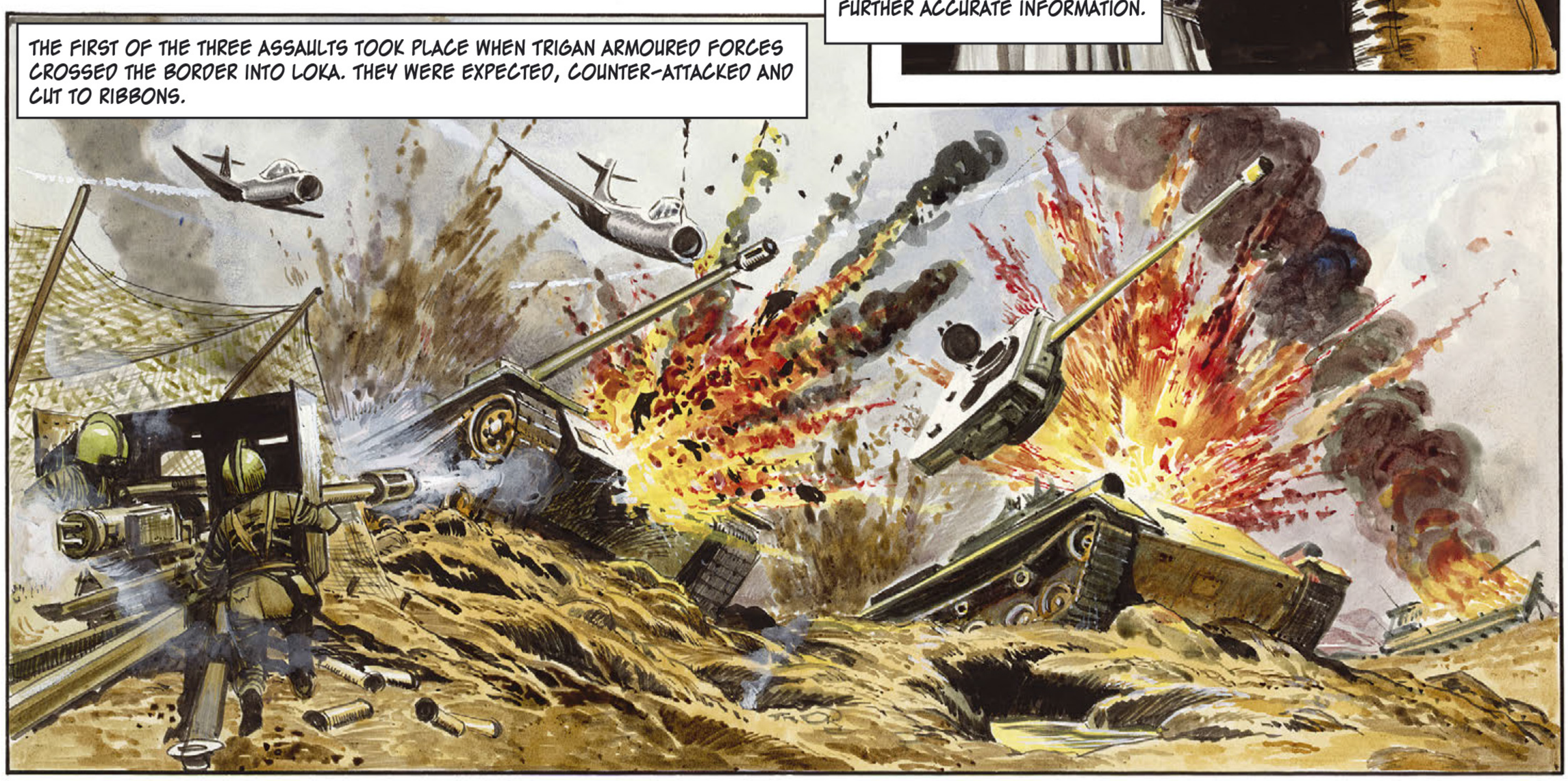

THAT NIGHT, TOTH ZANDU DROVE HIS LUXURY HOVER-AUTO THROUGH THE DARKENED STREETS OF THE CAPITAL.
HALT! DON'T YOU KNOW IT'S FORBIDDEN TO BE OUT AFTER NIGHTFALL?
I AM TOTH ZANDU, ADVISOR TO THE WAR COUNCIL.

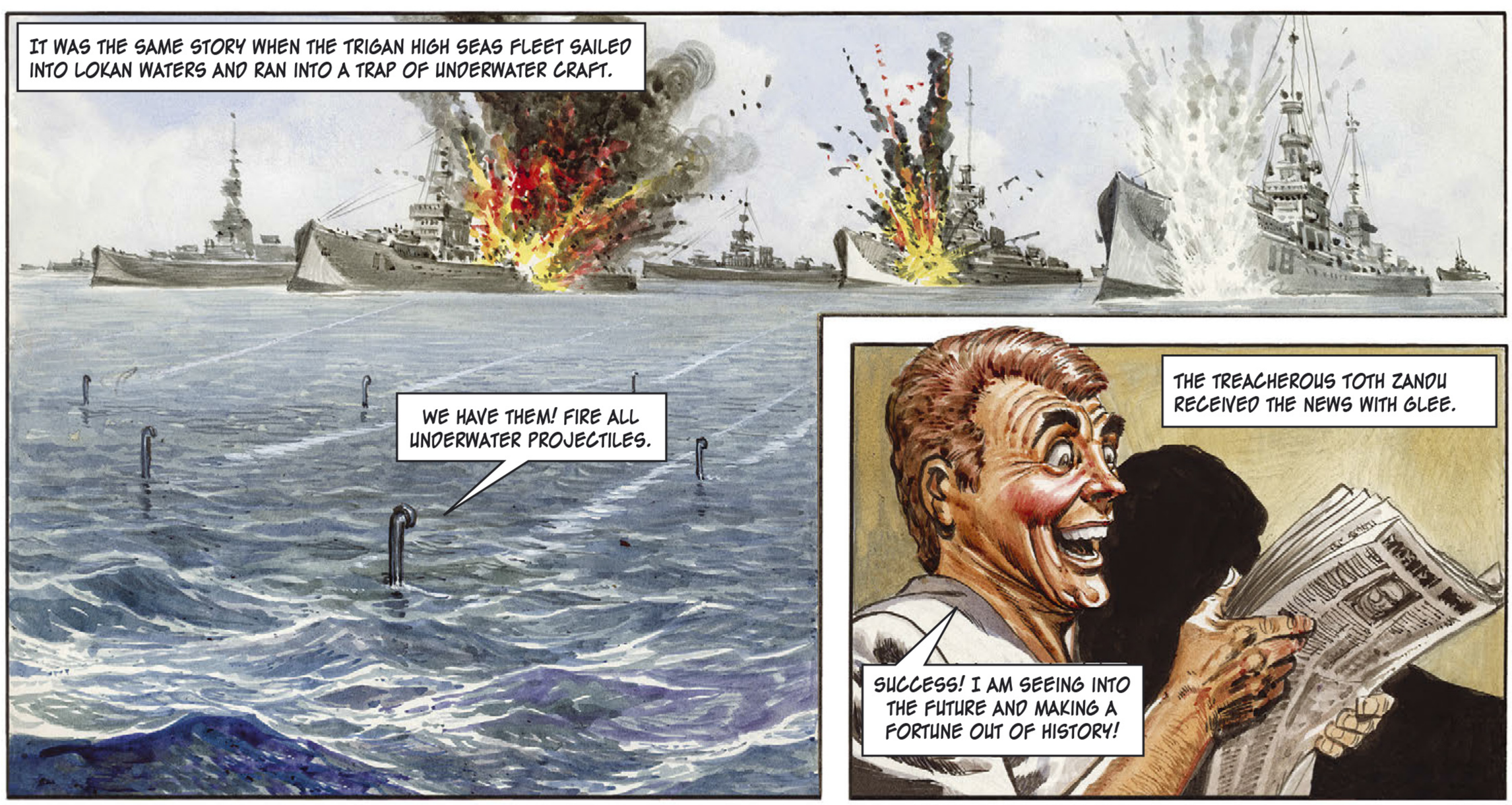

HIS VERY NAME ALREADY CARRIED GREAT WEIGHT.
YOUR PARDON, EXCELLENCY! WE DID NOT RECOGNISE YOU. DRIVE ON, PLEASE.


BY THE DARK SEA SHORE BEYOND THE CITY, A CRAFT WAITED.
COME OUT, FRIEND. YOU'RE SAFE NOW.


THAT FISHING BOAT WILL LAND YOU ON THE LOKAN SHORE TOMORROW. AND WHEN YOU REACH LOKA CITY.
I GIVE YOUR MESSAGE TO OUR LEADERS.


THIS LIST CONTAINS PRECISE DETAILS OF THREE ASSAULTS BY LAND, SEA AND AIR THAT THE TRIGANS ARE PLANNING TO MAKE AGAINST LOKA. THE INFORMATION WILL COST YOUR COUNTRY FIVE MILLION THULLARS! A PR OMPT PAYMENT WILL ENSURE FURTHER ACCURATE INFORMATION.


THE FIRST OF THE THREE ASSAULTS TOOK PLACE WHEN TRIGAN ARMOURED FORCES CROSSED THE BORDER INTO LOKA. THEY WERE EXPECTED, COUNTER-ATTACKED AND CUT TO RIBBONS.

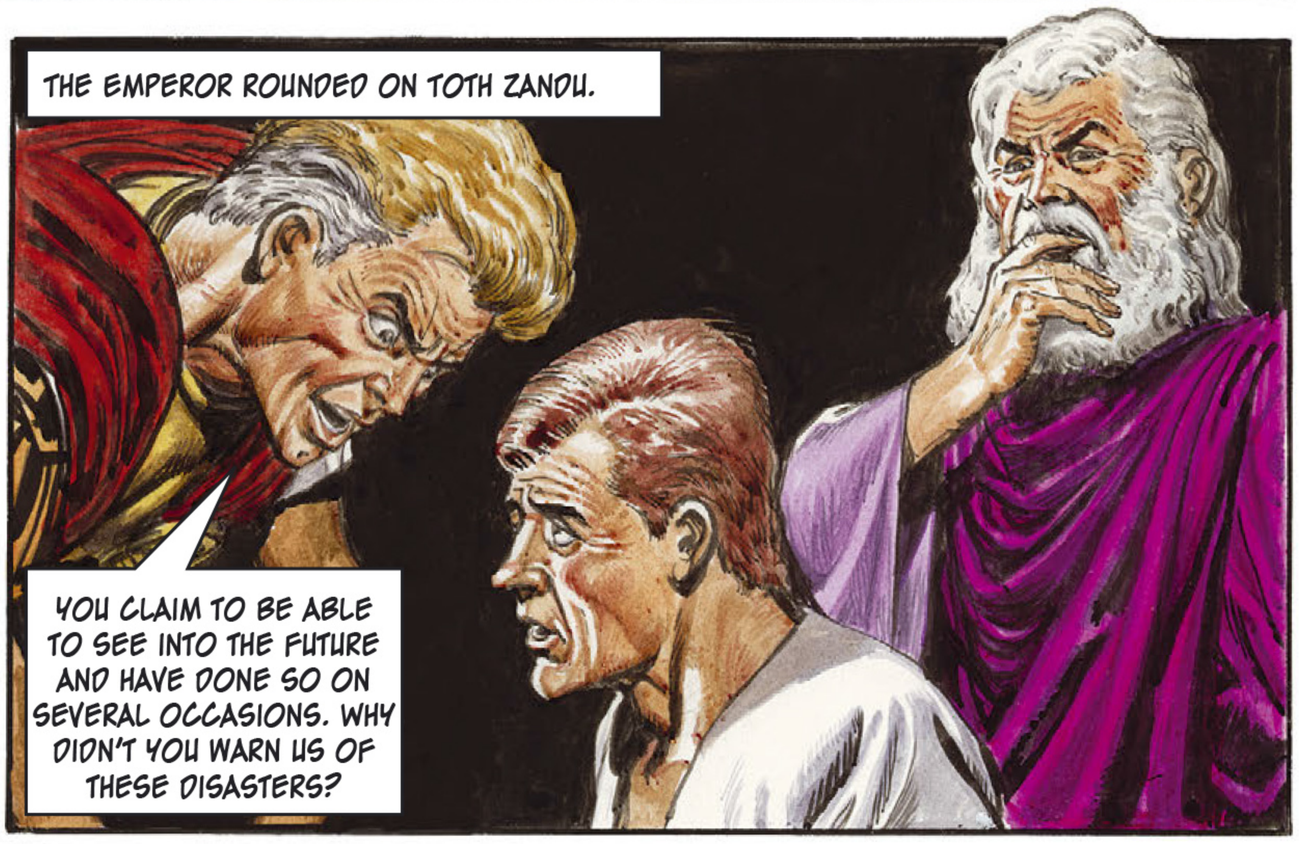

IT WAS THE SAME STORY WHEN THE TRIGAN HIGH SEAS FLEET SAILED INTO LOKAN WATERS AND RAN INTO A TRAP OF UNDERWATER CRAFT.
WE HAVE THEM! FIRE ALL UNDERWATER PROJECTILES.
THE TREACHEROUS TOTH ZANDU RECEIVED THE NEWS WITH GLEE.
SUCCESS! I AM SEEING INTO THE FUTURE AND MAKING A FORTUNE OUT OF HISTORY!

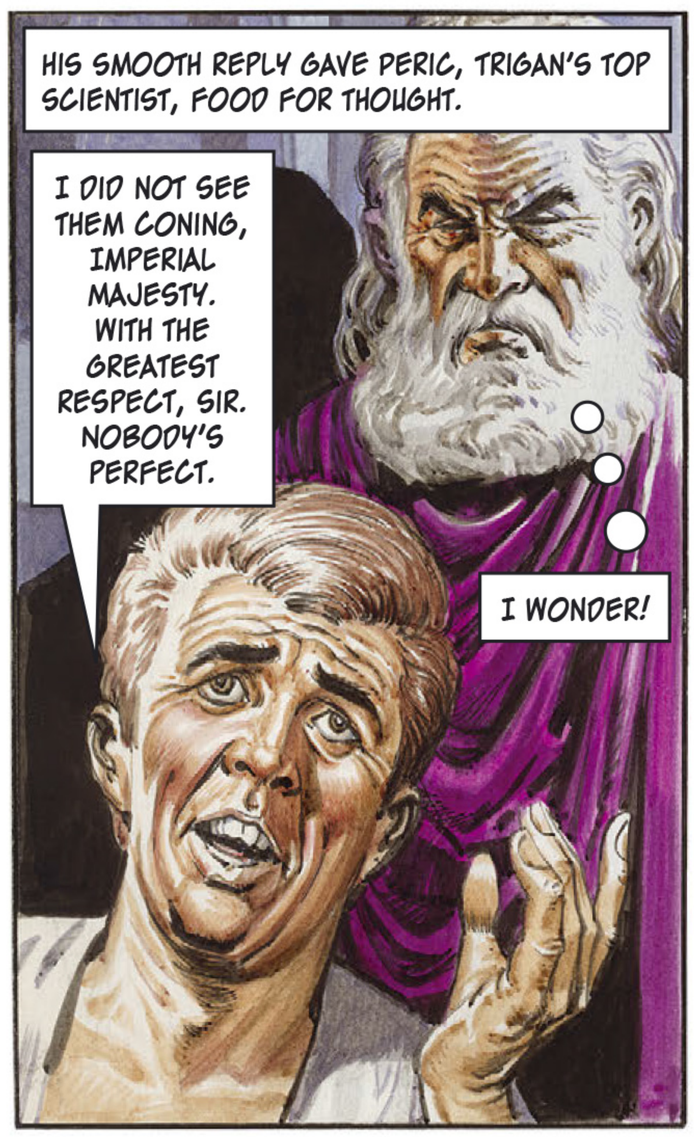
THE SHATTERED REMAINS OF THE TRIGAN ARMOURED FORCES STRUGGLED BACK INTO THE CITY, BITTERLY DENOUNCING WHAT THEY REGARDED AS THEIR BETRAYAL!

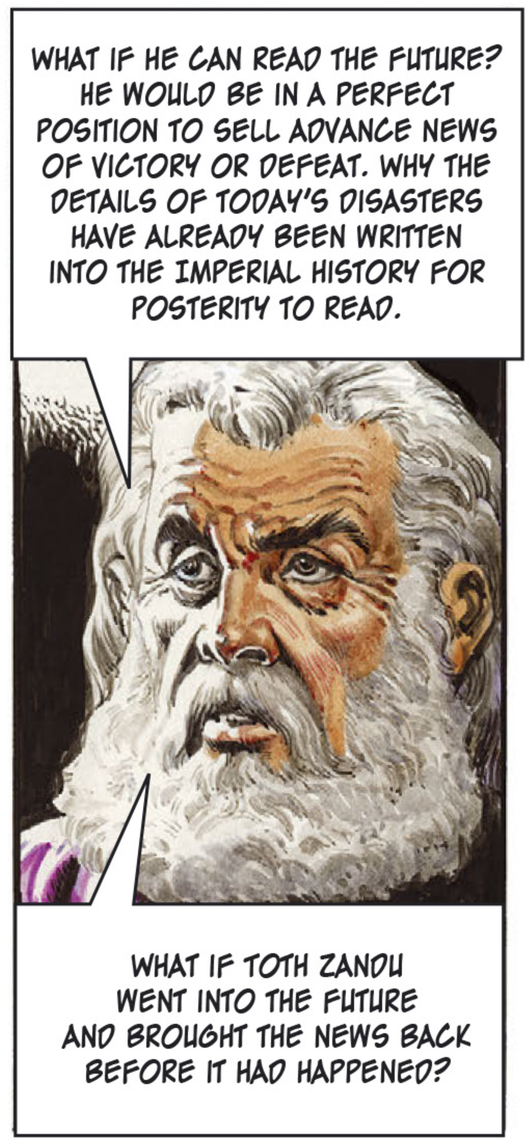
WHAT HAPPENED?

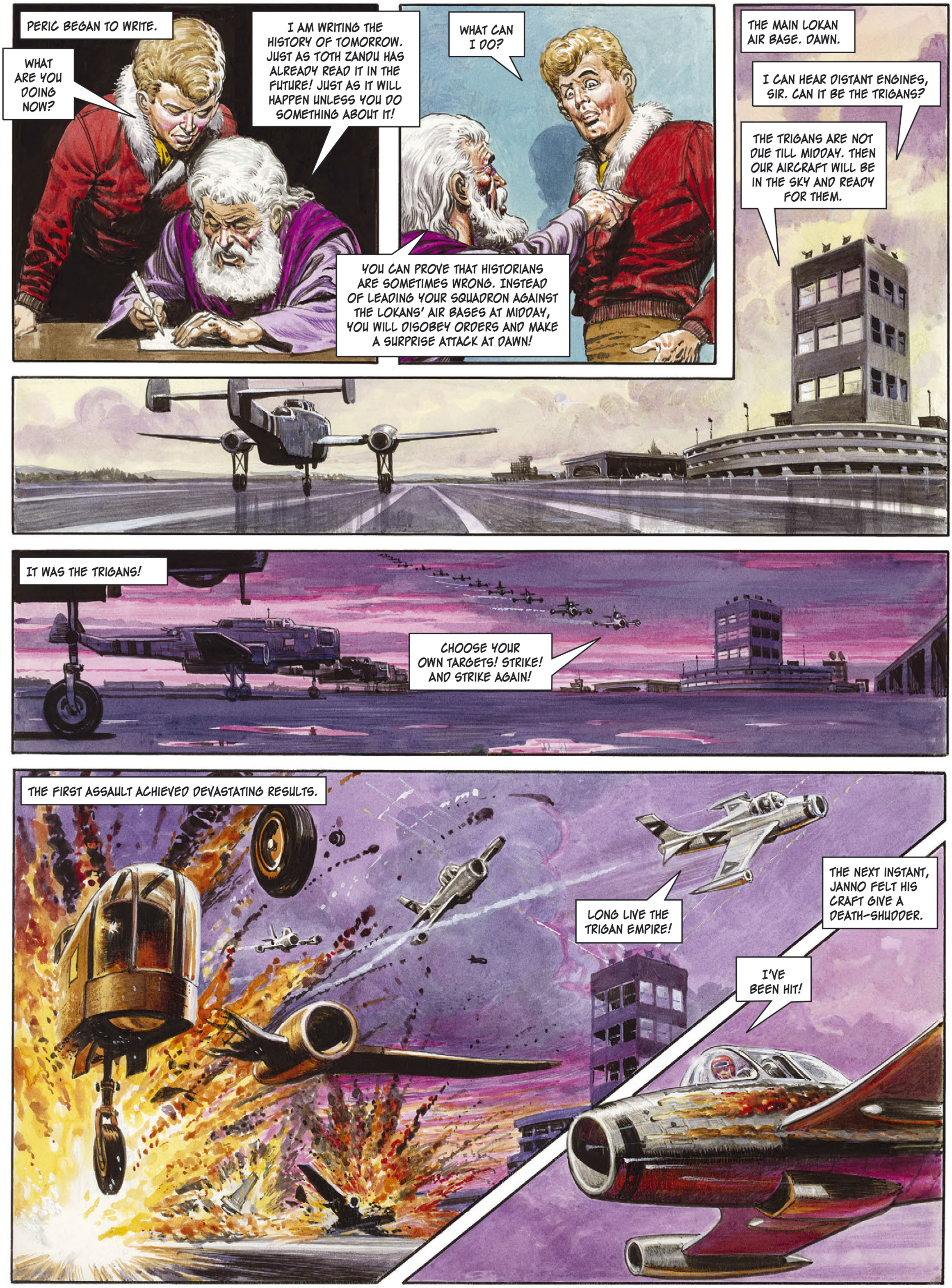
THE ACCURSED LOKANS WERE WAITING FOR US! WE WERE SHOT TO PIECES!

SOMEONE MUST HAVE TALKED!



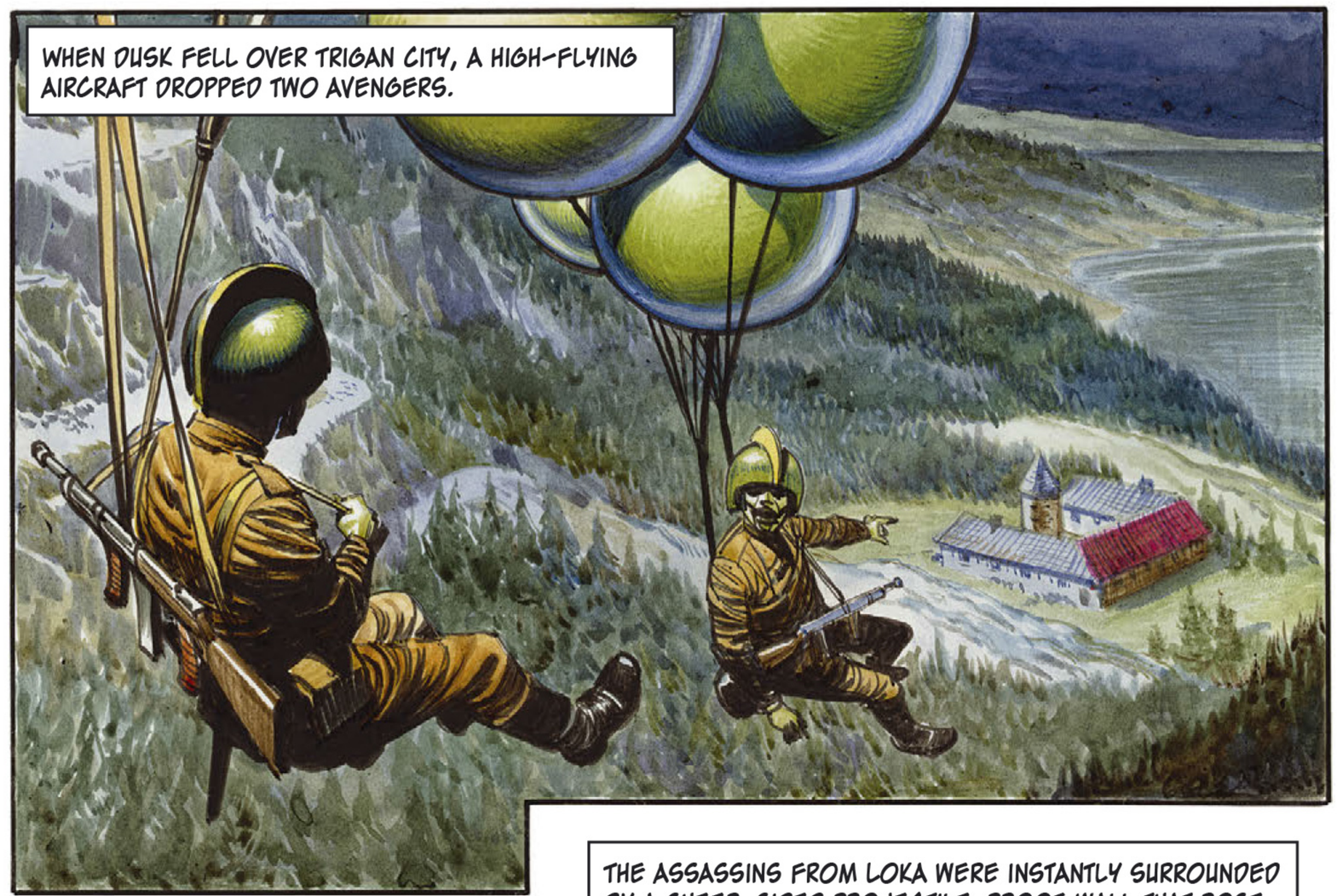





PERIC BEGAN TO WRITE.
WHAT ARE YOU DOING NOW?
I AM WRITING THE HISTORY OF TOMORROW. JUST AS TOTH ZANDU HAS ALREADY READ IT IN THE FUTURE! JUST AS IT WILL HAPPEN UNLESS YOU DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT!
WHAT CAN I DO?
YOU CAN PROVE THAT HISTORIANS ARE SOMETIMES WRONG. INSTEAD OF LEADING YOUR SQUADRON AGAINST THE LOKANS' AIR BASES AT MIDDAY, YOU WILL DISOBEY ORDERS AND MAKE A SURPRISE ATTACK AT DAWN!
THE MAIN LOKAN AIR BASE. DAWN.
I CAN HEAR DISTANT ENGINES, SIR. CAN IT BE THE TRIGANS?
THE TRIGANS ARE NOT DUE TILL MIDDAY. THEN OUR AIRCRAFT WILL BE IN THE SKY AND READY FOR THEM.
IT WAS THE TRIGANS!
CHOOSE YOUR OWN TARGETS! STRIKE! AND STRIKE AGAIN!
THE FIRST ASSAULT ACHIEVED DEVASTATING RESULTS.
LONG LIVE THE TRIGAN EMPIRE!
THE NEXT INSTANT, JANNO FELT HIS CRAFT GIVE A DEATH-SHUDDER.
I'VE BEEN HIT!

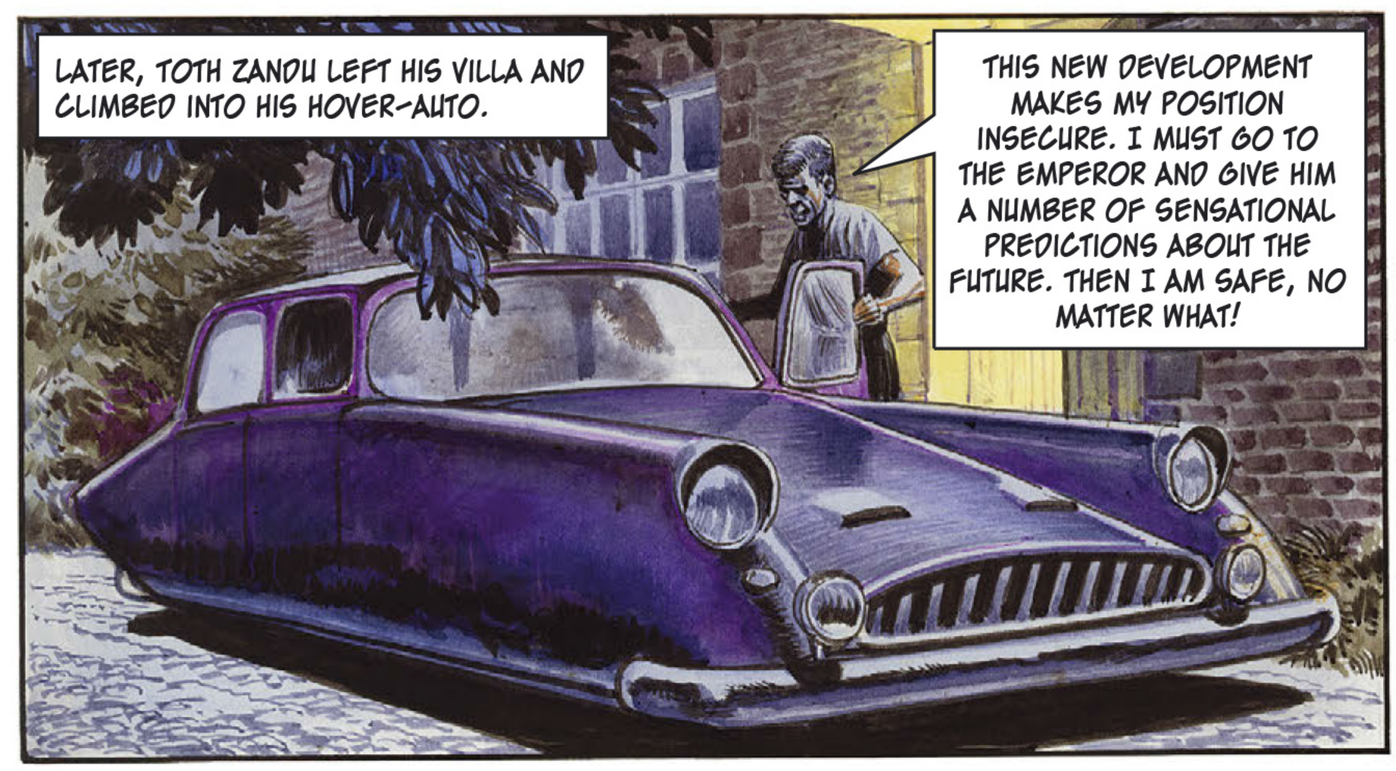
JANNO DIVED HIS STRICKEN CRAFT TOWARDS A BROAD RIVER.
WILL I MAKE IT?
I'VE BLOWN OFF THE CANOPY. THERE'S STILL A CHANCE.
JANNO KICKED HIS WAY OUT OF THE WRECKAGE.
I'M SAFE – IF ONLY MY LUNGS... HOLD... OUT!
BUT AS HE CLAWED HIS WAY TO THE BANK.
COME OUT WITH YOUR HANDS ON YOUR HEAD!
LATER, HE WAS INTERROGATED.
SO TOTH ZANDU IS THE TRAITOR!
WHY DID YOU START THE ATTACK AT DAWN? TOTH ZANDU INFORMED US YOU WERE COMING AT MIDDAY.
I HAVE NOTHING TO SAY.
THE TRAITOR WAS ALREADY MARKED FOR PUNISHMENT. LATER, IN ANOTHER PART OF THE LOKAN HEADQUARTERS, GRIM ORDERS WERE GIVEN.
YOU ARE THE ONE WHO FIRST MADE CONTACT WITH TOTH ZANDU?
YES, SIR.
YOU WILL ACCOMPANY THIS TRAINED KILLER TO TRIGAN CITY. YOU WILL LEAD HIM TO THE TRAITOR'S RESIDENCE AND POINT HIM OUT. THEN YOU WILL RENDER ANY NECESSARY ASSISTANCE IN ELIMINATING TOTH ZANDU.

ALL THAT DAY, BELLS RANG THROUGHOUT THE TRIGAN EMPIRE IN HONOUR OF THE VICTORIOUS ATTACK. TOTH ZANDU WAS BAFFLED AND FRIGHTENED.
LOKA IS NOW IN DESPERATE STRAITS FOR, DESPITE THEIR RECENT VICTORIES ON LAND AND SEA, THEY ARE NOW WITHOUT AIR COVER.
IT CAN'T BE TRUE! I READ OF THE TRIGANS' DEFEAT IN THE FUTURE!

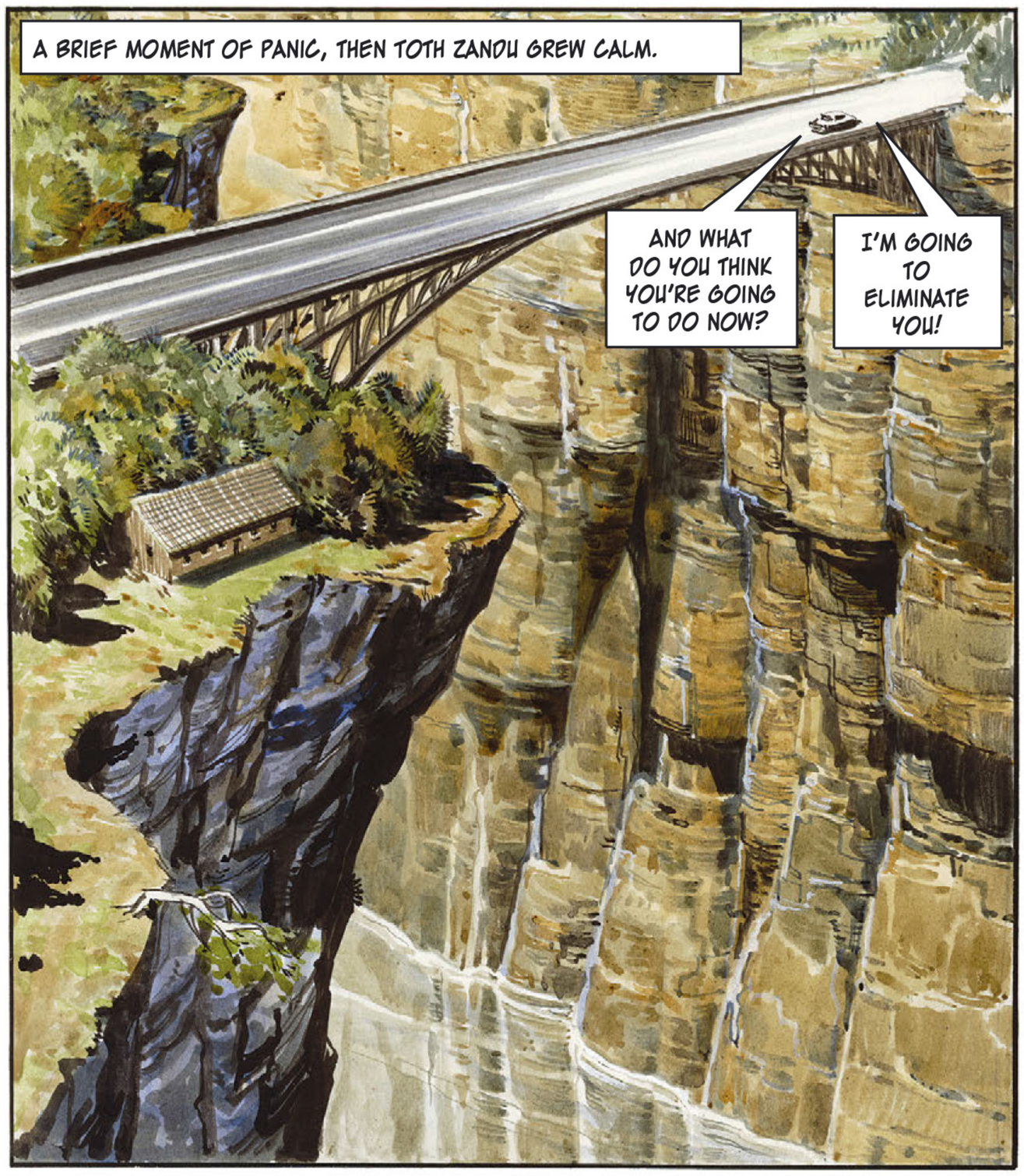

WHEN DUSK FELL OVER TRIGAN CITY, A HIGH-FLYING AIRCRAFT DROPPED TWO AVENGERS.

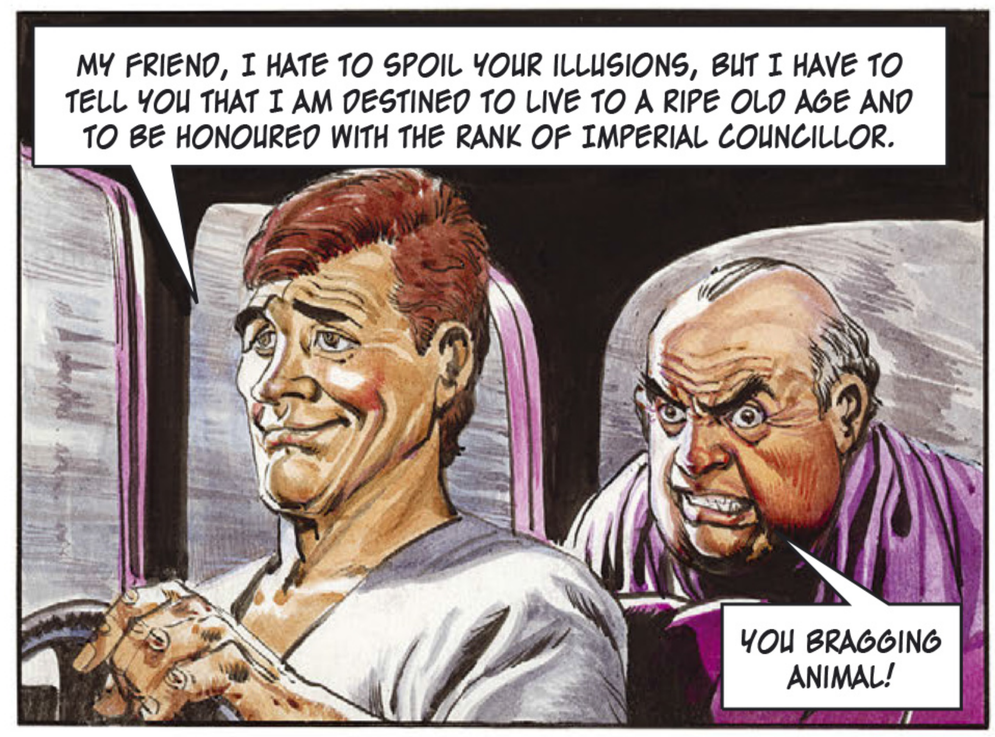
TOTH ZANDU WAS ALONE IN HIS LUXURY VILLA WHEN THEY BURST IN ON HIM.
I THINK YOU CAN GUESS WHY WE'RE HERE, DOUBLE-DEALER!
TOTH ZANDU'S HAND STABBED A BUTTON.
DON LAWRENCE

THE ASSASSINS FROM LOKA WERE INSTANTLY SURROUNDED BY A SHEER-SIDED PROJECTILE-PROOF WALL THAT ROSE FROM THE FLOOR.
FOOLS! THOUGH I KNOW THAT NO HARM IS DESTINED TO COME TO ME, I TAKE REASONABLE PRECAUTIONS AGAINST MY ENEMIES!


LATER, TOTH ZANDU LEFT HIS VILLA AND CLIMBED INTO HIS HOVER-AUTO.
THIS NEW DEVELOPMENT MAKES MY POSITION INSECURE. I MUST GO TO THE EMPEROR AND GIVE HIM A NUMBER OF SENSATIONAL PREDICTIONS ABOUT THE FUTURE. THEN I AM SAFE, NO MATTER WHAT!

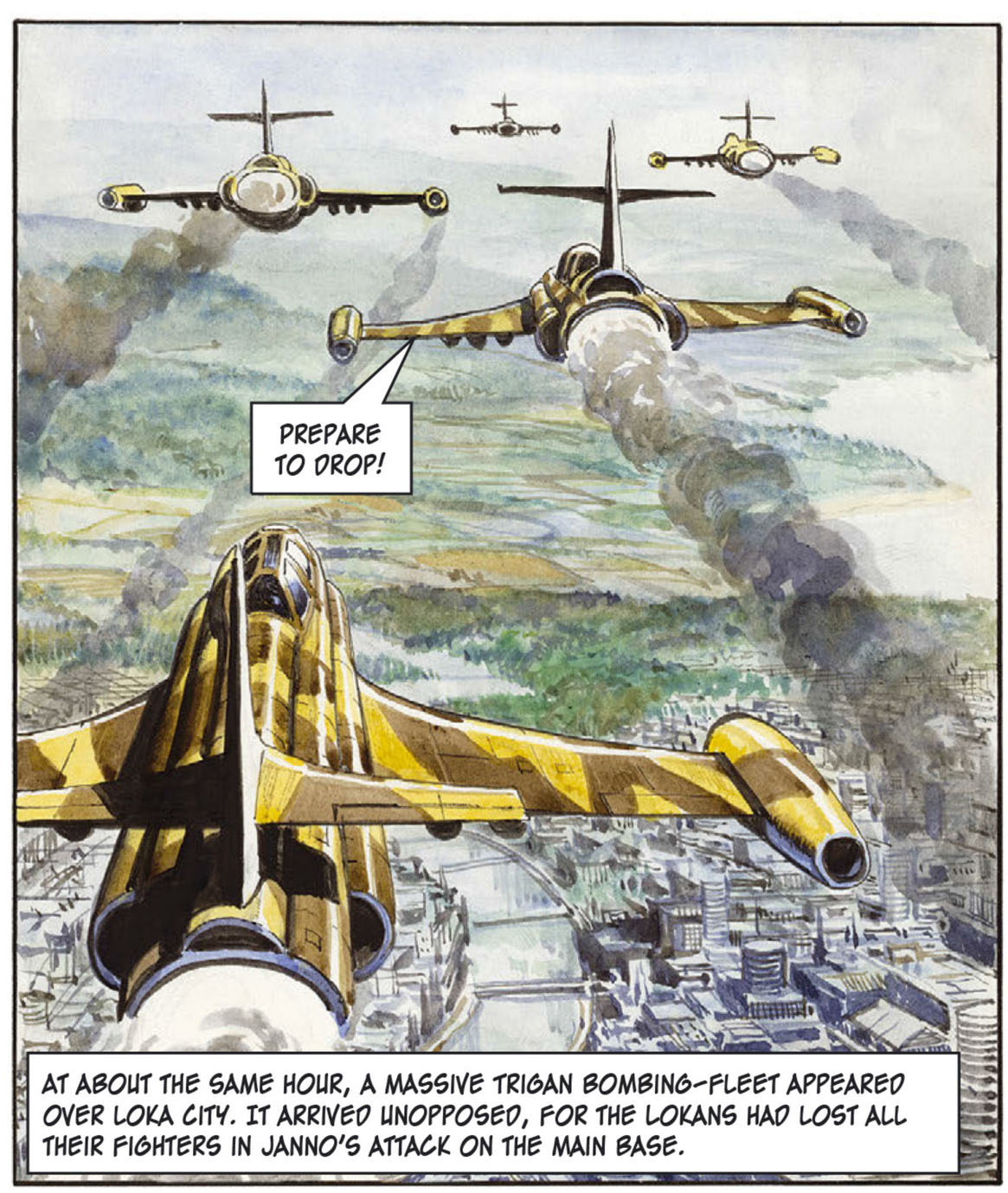
AS HE SPED TOWARDS THE CITY CENTRE, HE HEARD A SOUND BEHIND HIM.
YOU! WHAT DO YOU WANT?
VENGEANCE!
IT WAS TOTH ZANDU'S SWORN ENEMY – THE ONE HE HAD CHEATED OUT OF A FORTUNE.

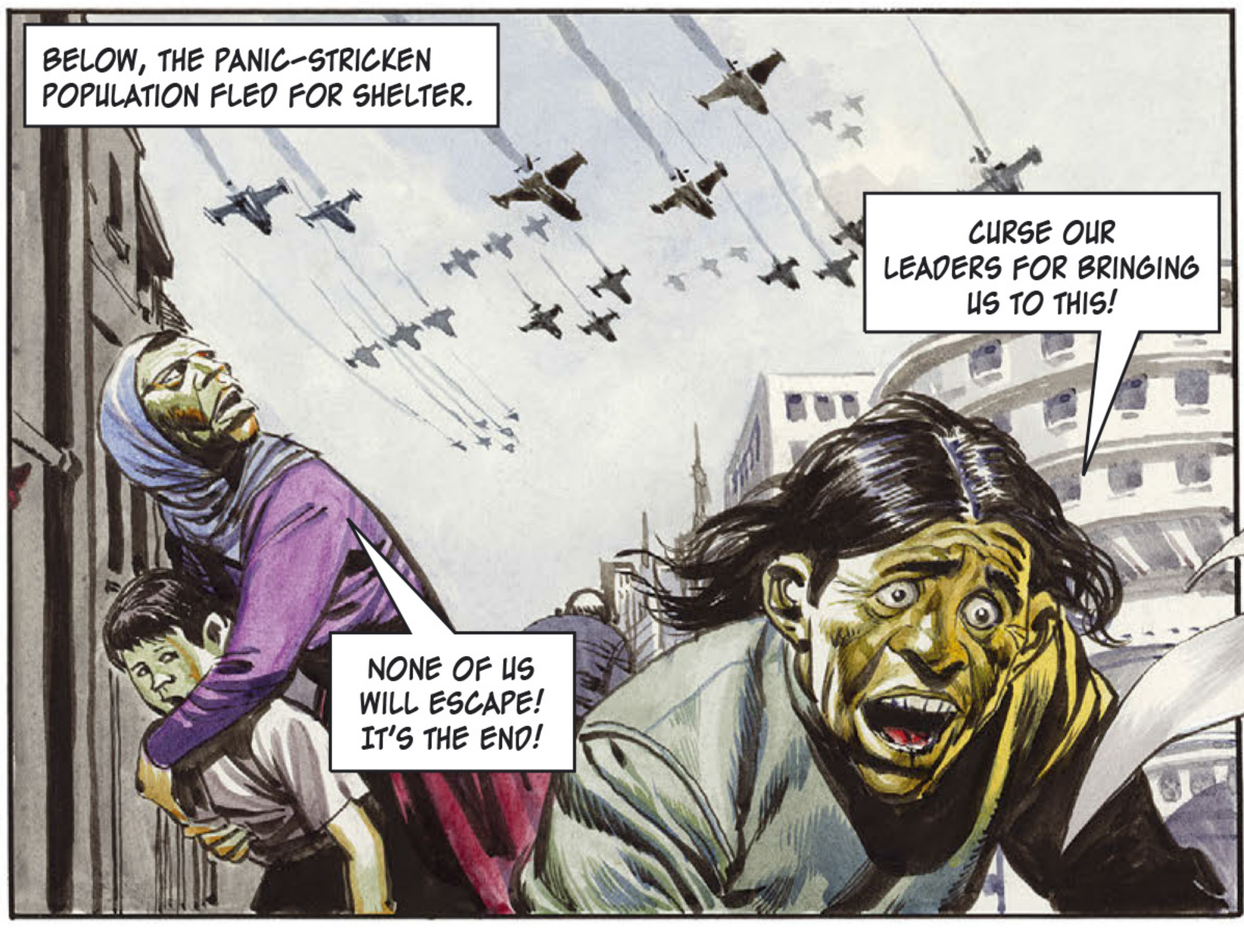

A BRIEF MOMENT OF PANIC, THEN TOTH ZANDU GREW CALM.
AND WHAT DO YOU THINK YOU'RE GOING TO DO NOW?
I'M GOING TO ELIMINATE YOU!


MY FRIEND, I HATE TO SPOIL YOUR ILLUSIONS, BUT I HAVE TO TELL YOU THAT I AM DESTINED TO LIVE TO A RIPE OLD AGE AND TO BE HONOURED WITH THE RANK OF IMPERIAL COUNCILLOR.
YOU BRAGGING ANIMAL!

I'LL GIVE YOU 'IMPERIAL COUNCILLOR'!
LET GO OF ME, YOU FOOL!

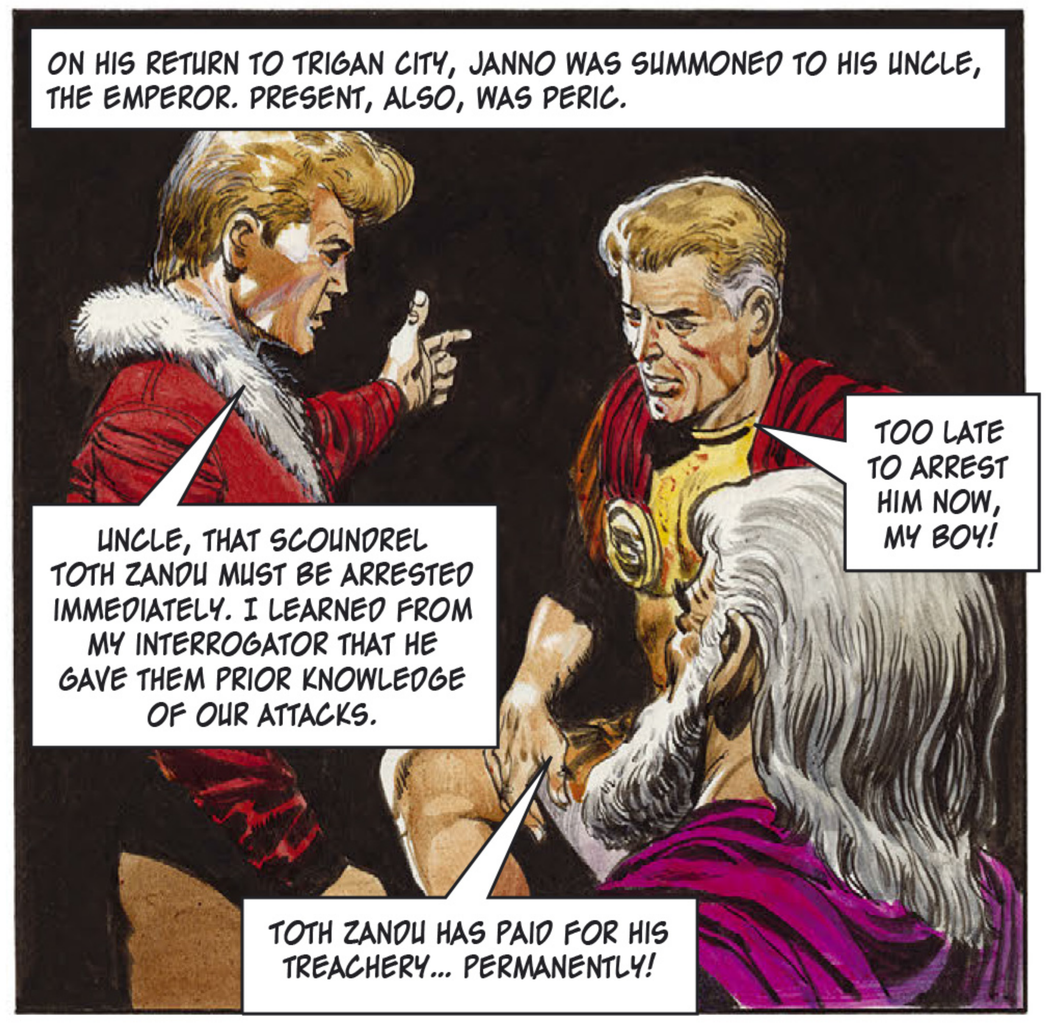
WILD WITH RAGE, THE OTHER DID NOT SEE THEIR PERIL TILL IT WAS TOO LATE.
THE HOVER-AUTO PLUNGED TO DESTRUCTION.


PREPARE TO DROP!
AT ABOUT THE SAME HOUR, A MASSIVE TRIGAN BOMBING-FLEET APPEARED OVER LOKA CITY. IT ARRIVED UNOPPOSED, FOR THE LOKANS HAD LOST ALL THEIR FIGHTERS IN JANNO'S ATTACK ON THE MAIN BASE.

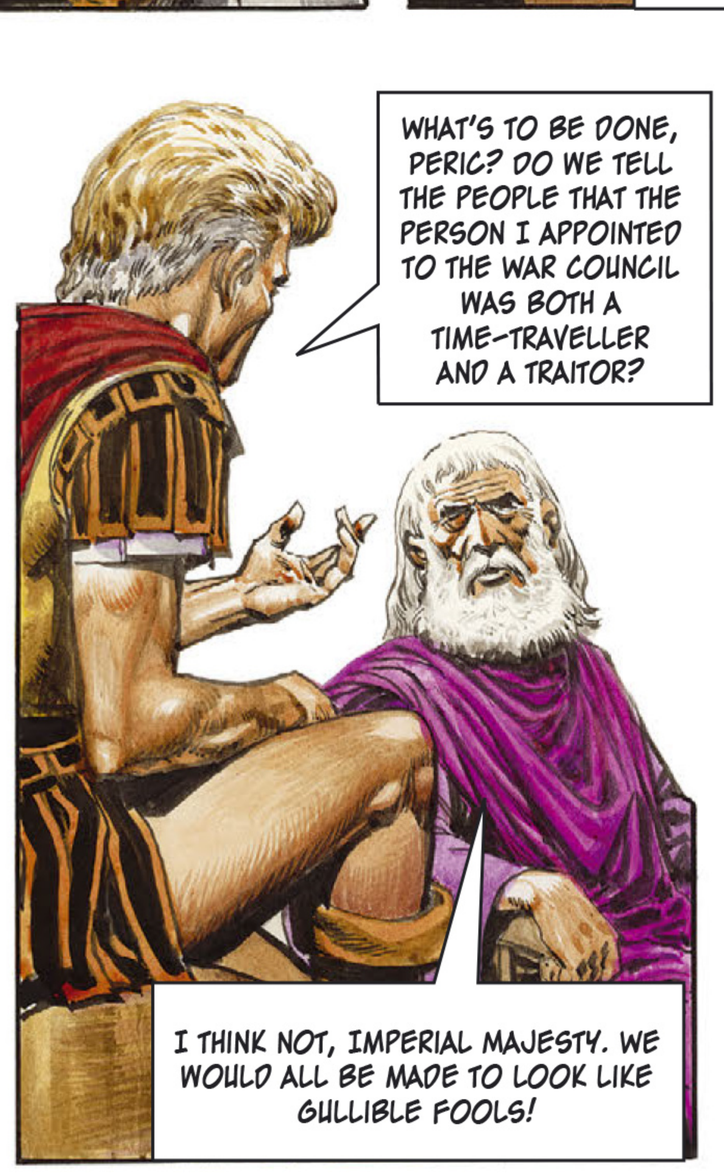

BELOW, THE PANIC-STRICKEN POPULATION FLED FOR SHELTER.
CURSE OUR LEADERS FOR BRINGING US TO THIS!
NONE OF US WILL ESCAPE! IT'S THE END!

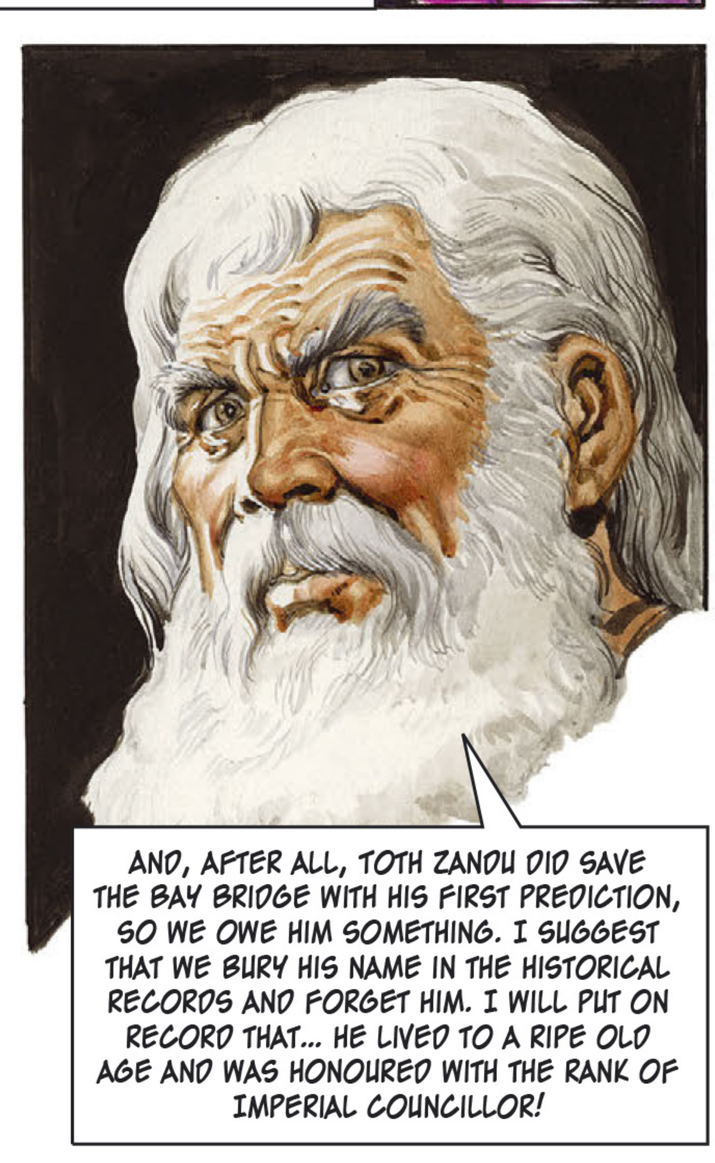
DOWN FROM THE SKY SPIRALLED MASSES OF... LEAFLETS!
IT SAYS 'THIS COULD HAVE BEEN A BOMB! NEXT TIME IT WILL BE... UNLESS YOUR LEADERS MAKE PEACE WITH US.'

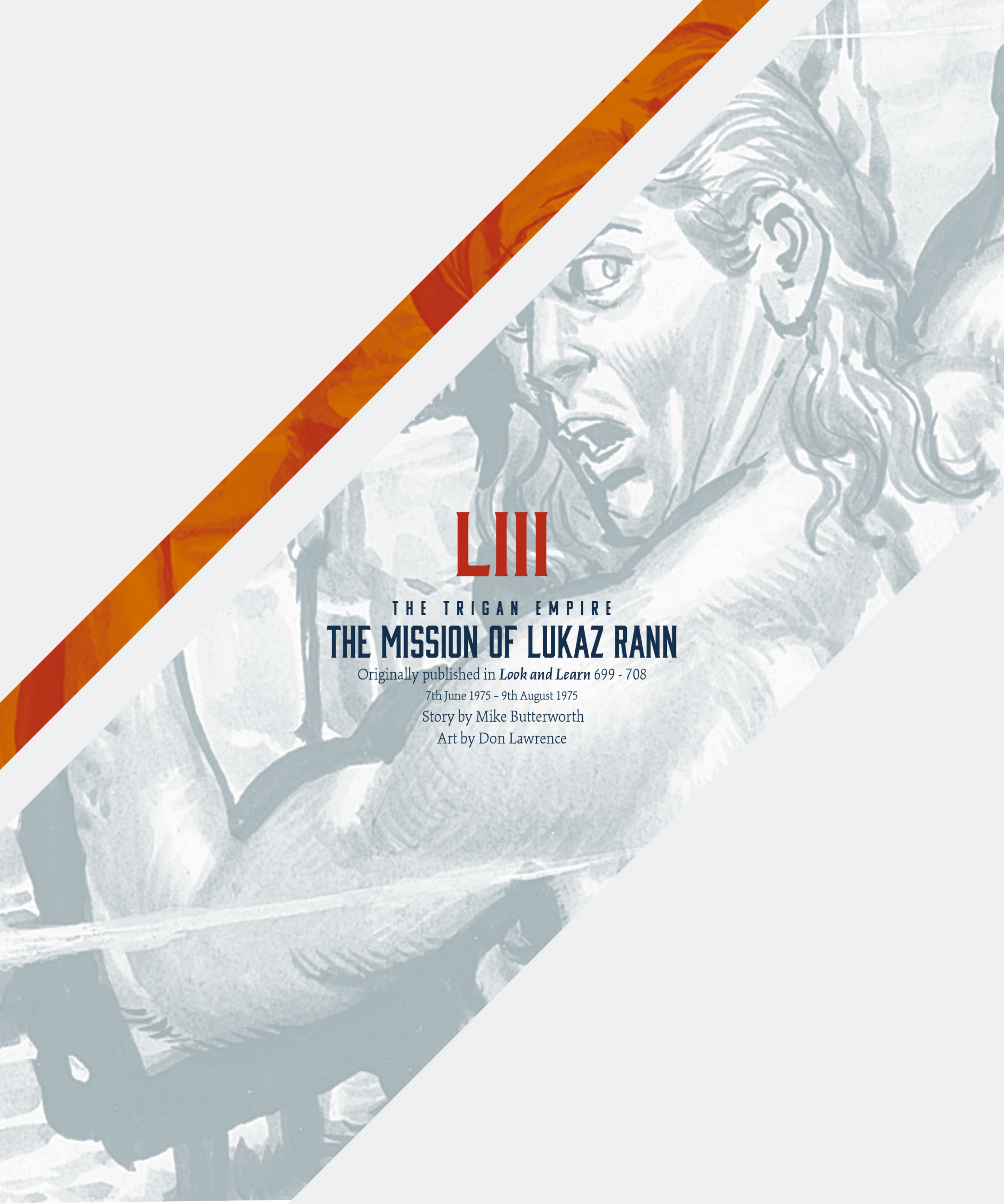
LATER, JANNO ROSE TO HIS FEET AS A LOKAN OFFICER ENTERED HIS CELL.
WHAT'S THIS? AM I TO BE TAKEN FOR MORE INTERROGATION?
NO. YOU ARE FREE, WE HAVE SURRENDERED! THE WAR IS OVER!


ON HIS RETURN TO TRIGAN CITY, JANNO WAS SUMMONED TO HIS UNCLE, THE EMPEROR. PRESENT, ALSO, WAS PERIC.
UNCLE, THAT SCOUNDREL TOTH ZANDU MUST BE ARRESTED IMMEDIATELY. I LEARNED FROM MY INTERROGATOR THAT HE GAVE THEM PRIOR KNOWLEDGE OF OUR ATTACKS.
TOO LATE TO ARREST HIM NOW, MY BOY!
TOTH ZANDU HAS PAID FOR HIS TREACHERY... PERMANENTLY!

THERE SEEMS LITTLE DOUBT THAT HE HAD ACCESS TO THE FUTURE. IT IS POSSIBLE THAT HE EVEN HAD ACCESS TO THE ENTRIES IN THE IMPERIAL RECORDS AS YET UNWRITTEN.
A TIME-TRAVELLER?


WHAT'S TO BE DONE, PERIC? DO WE TELL THE PEOPLE THAT THE PERSON I APPOINTED TO THE WAR COUNCIL WAS BOTH A TIME-TRAVELLER AND A TRAITOR?
I THINK NOT, IMPERIAL MAJESTY. WE WOULD ALL BE MADE TO LOOK LIKE GULLIBLE FOOLS!


AND, AFTER ALL, TOTH ZANDU DID SAVE THE BAY BRIDGE WITH HIS FIRST PREDICTION, SO WE OWE HIM SOMETHING. I SUGGEST THAT WE BURY HIS NAME IN THE HISTORICAL RECORDS AND FORGET HIM. I WILL PUT ON RECORD THAT... HE LIVED TO A RIPE OLD AGE AND WAS HONOURED WITH THE RANK OF IMPERIAL COUNCILLOR!



LIII

THE TRIGAN EMPIRE

THE MISSION OF LUKAZ RANN

Originally published in ***Look and Learn*** 699 - 708

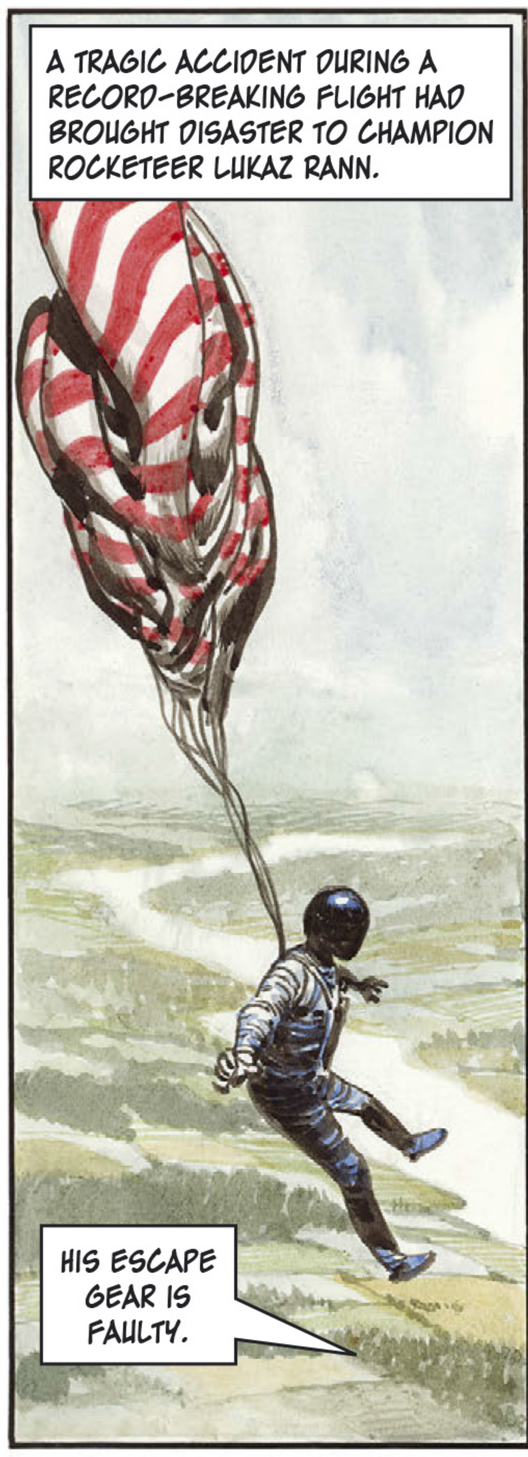
7th June 1975 – 9th August 1975

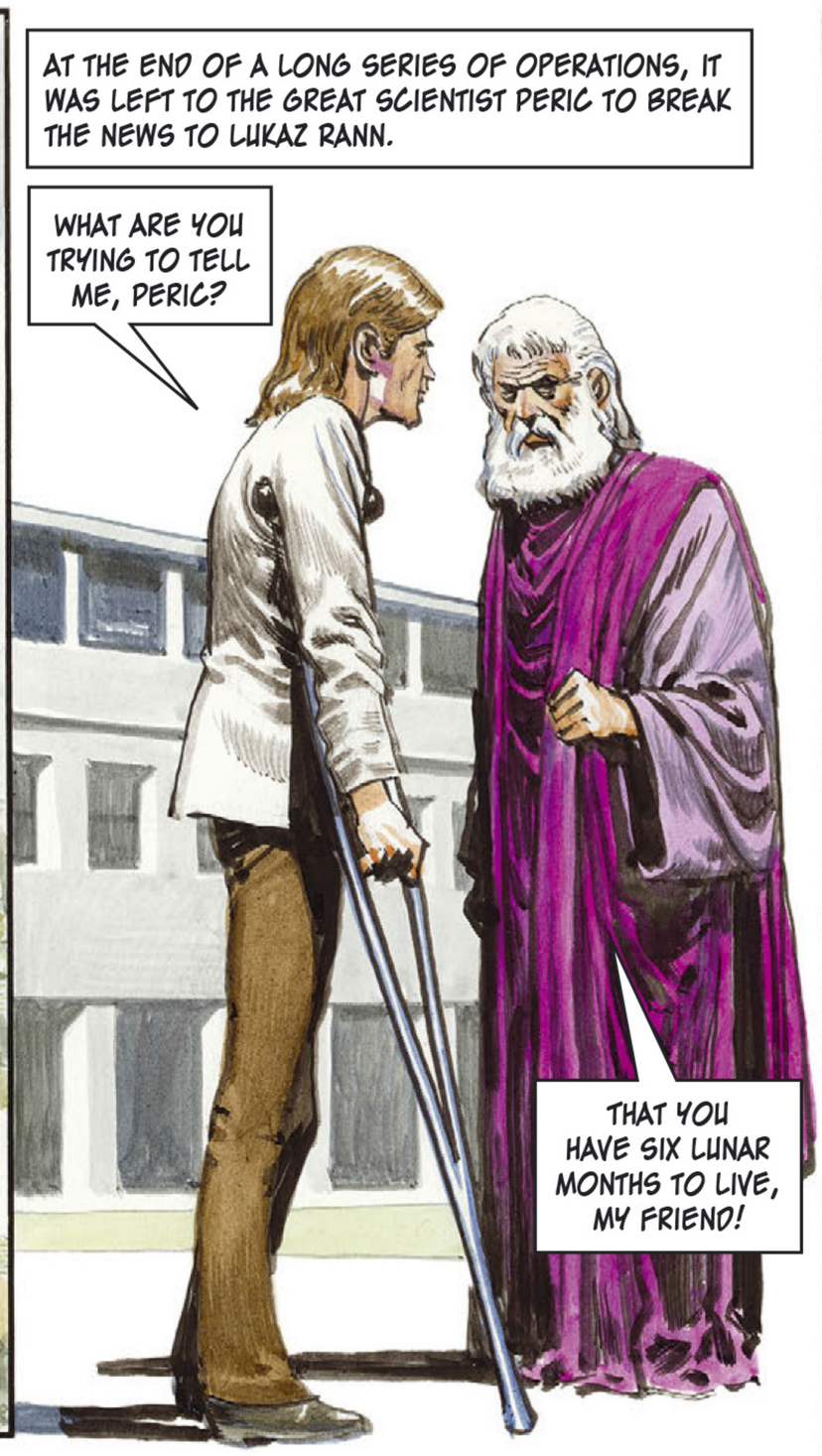
Story by Mike Butterworth

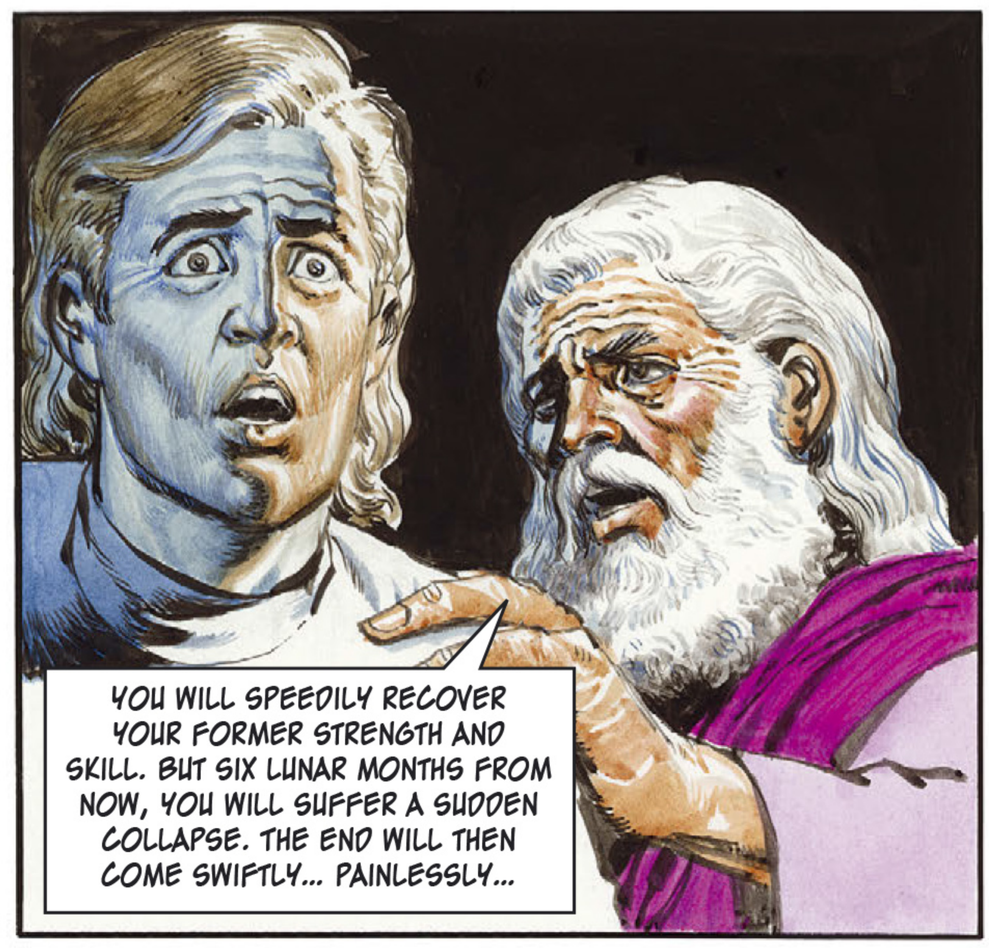
Art by Don Lawrence

IT SEEMED THAT ALL TRIGAN CITY WAS GATHERED ON THE GREAT PLAIN OUTSIDE THE WALLS. THE ANNOUNCER'S VOICE STILLED THE MULTITUDE TO SILENCE...
NOW FOR THE MOST THRILLING SPORTING EVENT OF THE LUNAR YEAR! I GIVE YOU... LUKAZ RANN!
... CHAMPION ROCKETEER OF THE TRIGAN EMPIRE AND THE PLANET ELEKTON! AND TODAY, LUKAZ RANN WILL ATTEMPT TO BREAK HIS OWN HEIGHT RECORD OF THIRTY-THOUSAND FROMMS.
ROCKETEERING WAS THE MOST DANGEROUS SPORT KNOWN AND LUKAZ RANN WAS ITS MOST INTREPID HERO.
THREE - TWO - ONE - ZERO - FIRE!
THE LIVING PROJECTILE STREAKED SKYWARDS.
HE'S DONE IT! HE'S BROKEN HIS OWN RECORD! THE HEIGHT INDICATOR GIVES THIRTY-ONE THOUSAND - THIRTY-TWO THOUSAND FROMMS!
NOW HE'S PARTING FROM HIS ROCKET! HE... HE'S IN TROUBLE!

BEFORE THE HORRIFIED GAZE OF THOUSANDS OF UPTURNED EYES, THE ROCKETEER'S RESCUE EQUIPMENT FAILED ON OPENING.
LUKAZ FELL THIRTY-THREE THOUSAND FROMMS INTO THE WATERS OF TRIGAN BAY.
BY GREAT FORTUNE, HE WAS PICKED UP BY A PLEASURE BOAT.
CAREFUL WITH HIM, WIFE.
WHEN NEWS OF THE MISHAP WAS BROUGHT TO THE EMPEROR, TRIGO SUMMONED PERIC.
THE SURGEONS ARE OPERATING ON LUKAZ RANN IMMEDIATELY. I SHOULD LIKE YOU TO BE PRESENT AND GIVE THEM THE BENEFIT OF YOUR VAST KNOWLEDGE OF THE HEALING ARTS.
GLADLY, IMPERIAL MAJESTY.
THROUGHOUT THE RISING AND SETTING OF MANY SUNS, THE ROCKETEER'S LIFE HUNG IN THE BALANCE.
THE SURGEONS' SKILLS SEEMED TO BRING SUCCESS. BEFORE LONG, LUKAZ RANN WAS ABLE TO TAKE A FEW STEPS.
DO YOU SEE ME, PERIC? IN NO TIME AT ALL I'LL BE RIDING THE ROCKET AGAIN!
LUKAZ, I HAVE NEWS FOR YOU.
LUKAZ, YOU ARE POSSIBLY THE BRAVEST PERSON ON THIS PLANET. BUT STEEL YOURSELF! WHAT I AM GOING TO TELL YOU IS GOING TO TEST YOUR COURAGE TO THE BREAKING POINT!


A TRAGIC ACCIDENT DURING A RECORD-BREAKING FLIGHT HAD BROUGHT DISASTER TO CHAMPION ROCKETEER LUKAZ RANN.
HIS ESCAPE GEAR IS FAULTY.


AT THE END OF A LONG SERIES OF OPERATIONS, IT WAS LEFT TO THE GREAT SCIENTIST PERIC TO BREAK THE NEWS TO LUKAZ RANN.
WHAT ARE YOU TRYING TO TELL ME, PERIC?
THAT YOU HAVE SIX LUNAR MONTHS TO LIVE, MY FRIEND!

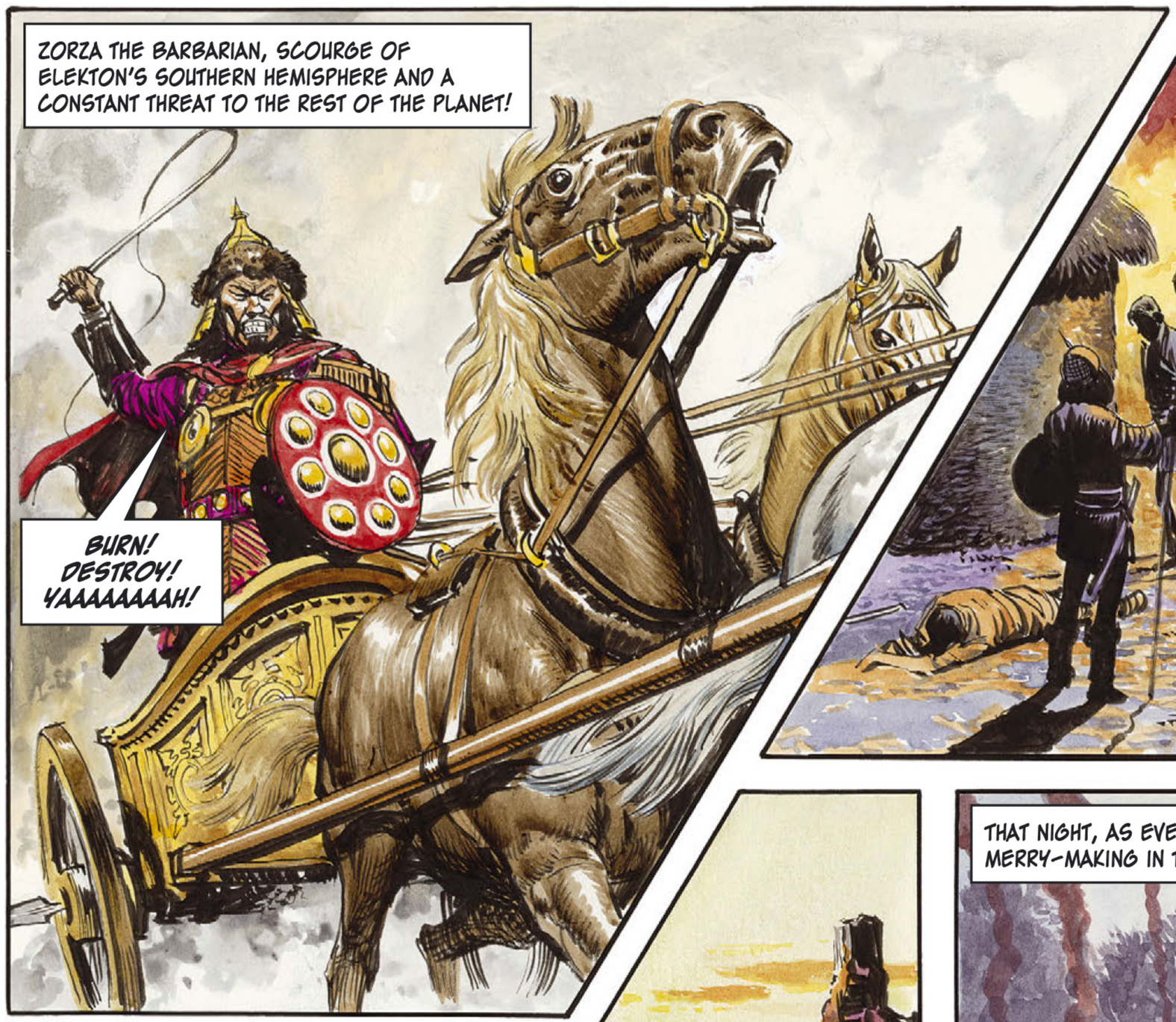

YOU WILL SPEEDILY RECOVER YOUR FORMER STRENGTH AND SKILL. BUT SIX LUNAR MONTHS FROM NOW, YOU WILL SUFFER A SUDDEN COLLAPSE. THE END WILL THEN COME SWIFTLY... PAINLESSLY...

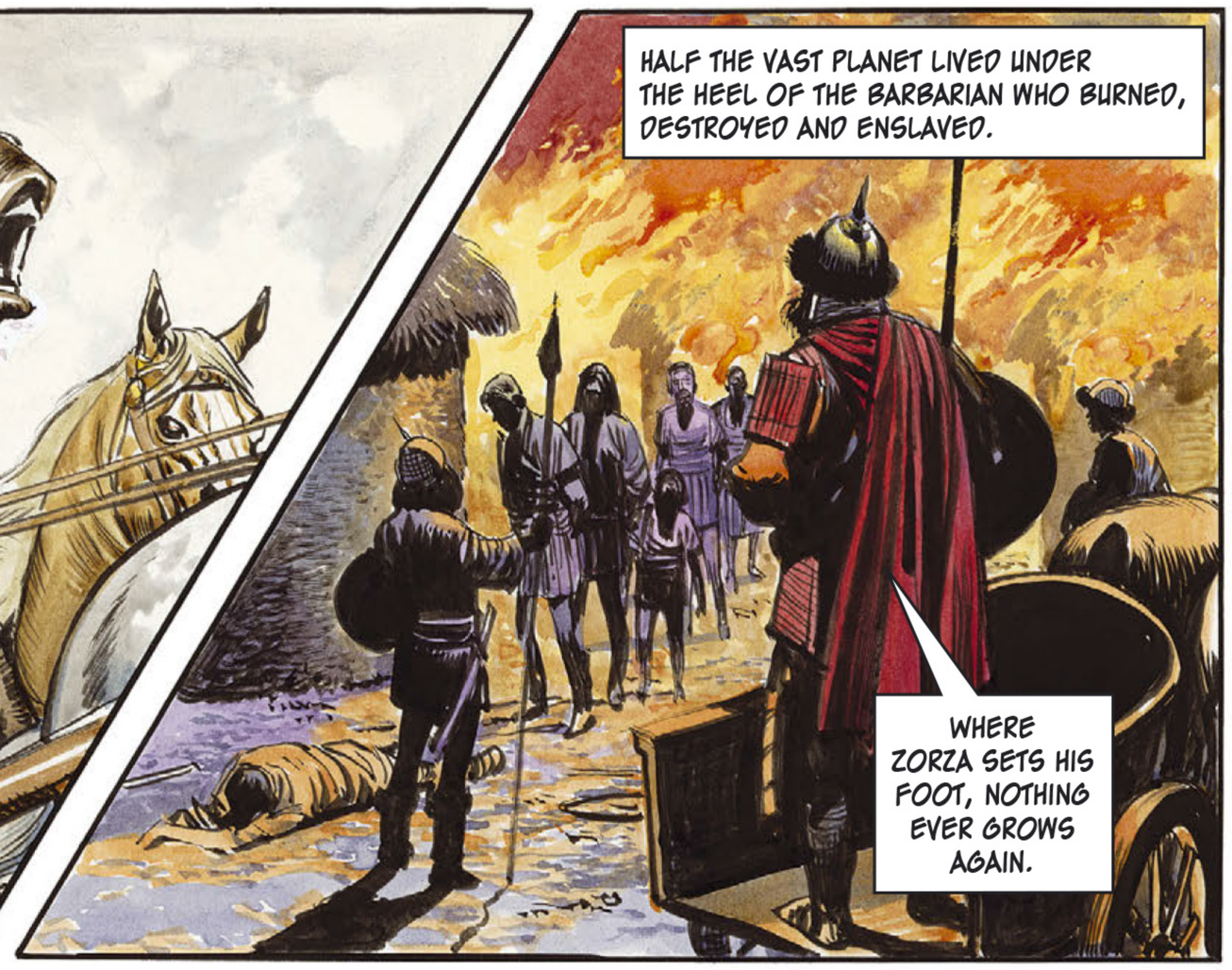
A FEW DAYS LATER, LUKAZ RANN LOOKED OUT FROM THE GROUNDS OF HIS SUMPTUOUS VILLA OVER THE CITY HE LOVED SO WELL.
SIX LUNAR MONTHS AND THEN I MUST BE PARTED FROM ALL THIS.

I MUST SPEND THOSE SIX MONTHS DOING SOMETHING TO BENEFIT THOSE I LEAVE BEHIND... SOMETHING TO BENEFIT ALL ELEKTON!

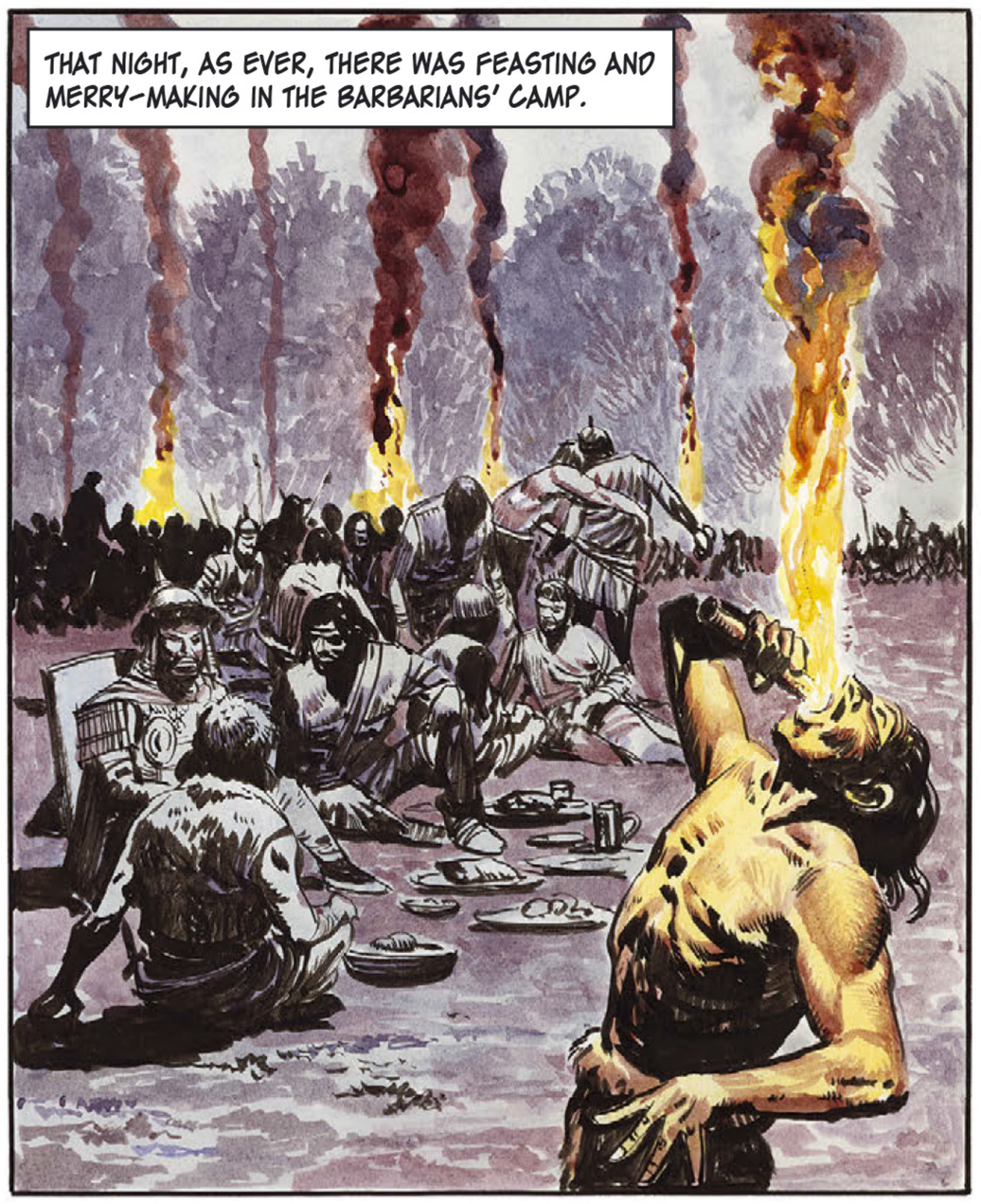
I HAVE IT! IN THE TIME LEFT TO ME, I WILL DESTROY THE POWER OF THE SIX MOST EVIL INHABITANTS OF THIS PLANET, LEAVING ELEKTON A BETTER PLACE TO LIVE IN.

WHILE HIS STRENGTH IMPROVED, LUKAZ RANN PREPARED DOSSIERS ON HIS SIX INTENDED VICTIMS.
THE SIX MOST DANGEROUS AND DETESTABLE CREATURES EVER TO BLIGHT THIS PLANET! AND THE FIRST ONE IS...

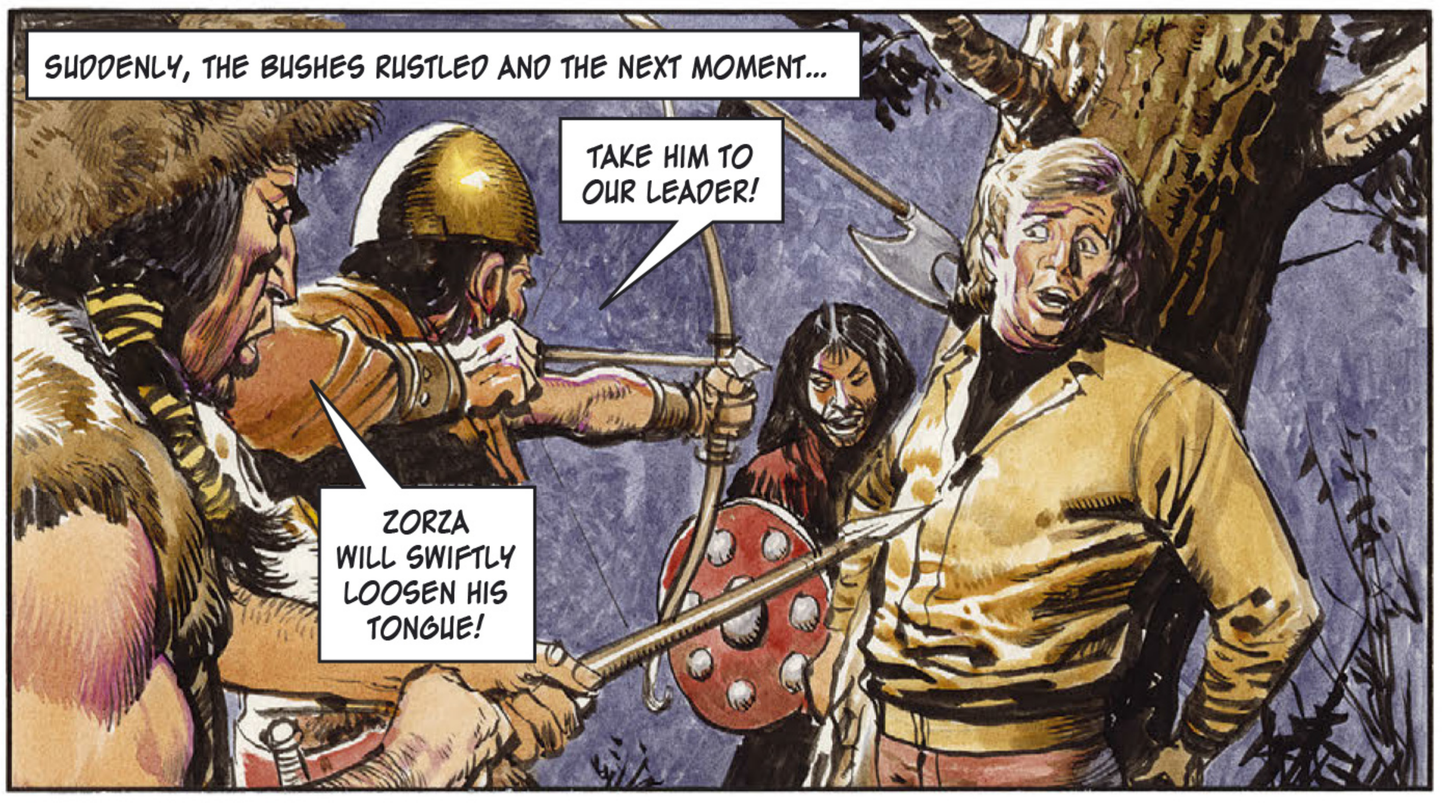

ZORZA THE BARBARIAN, SCOURGE OF ELEKTON'S SOUTHERN HEMISPHERE AND A CONSTANT THREAT TO THE REST OF THE PLANET!
BURN! DESTROY! YAAAAAAAAH!


HALF THE VAST PLANET LIVED UNDER THE HEEL OF THE BARBARIAN WHO BURNED, DESTROYED AND ENSLAVED.
WHERE ZORZA SETS HIS FOOT, NOTHING EVER GROWS AGAIN.

HIS PREPARATIONS MADE, LUKAZ RANN LEFT TRIGAN CITY IN HIS PERSONAL CRAFT. DUSK FOUND HIM HIGH ABOVE THE GREAT SOUTHERN WILDERNESS, HOME TO THE SAVAGE HORDE.
I'M COMING TO GET YOU, ZORZA!


THAT NIGHT, AS EVER, THERE WAS FEASTING AND MERRY-MAKING IN THE BARBARIANS' CAMP.

LUKAZ RANN WAS CLOSE AT HAND.
TONIGHT, WHEN YOU ARE ASLEEP, ZORZA, I SHALL...


SUDDENLY, THE BUSHES RUSTLED AND THE NEXT MOMENT...
TAKE HIM TO OUR LEADER!
ZORZA WILL SWIFTLY LOOSEN HIS TONGUE!

WE FOUND THIS ANIMAL LURKING IN THE SHADOWS. LET ME SPILL HIS BRAINS, ZORZA!
NOT YET! WHO ARE YOU AND WHAT ARE YOU DOING AT THE ENCAMPMENT OF ZORZA?

LUKAZ RANN'S QUICK WITS CAME TO HIS AID.
BY YOUR LEAVE, MASTER, I AM AN ENTERTAINER, A TUMBLER AND AN ACROBAT OF SOME MERIT. I HAVE COME TO AMUSE YOU AND EARN MY SUPPER.
SHOW US YOUR ACT, CUR. IF IT PLEASES ME, YOU DINE WITH US. IF IT DOESN'T, WE DINE ON YOU!

LUKAZ ASKED FOR ROPES TO BE RIGGED IN THE SURROUNDING TREES AND THEN CLIMBED HIGH ABOVE THE CAMP. AS A TRAINED ROCKETEER, HE WAS, OF COURSE, AN ADEPT ACROBAT.
I'M ALREADY UNDER A SENTENCE OF DEATH. SO I'VE NOTHING TO LOSE...

HE SWUNG INTO SPACE OVER THE SEARING HEAT OF THE CAMPFIRE.

EVEN THE BATTLE-HARDENED BARBARIANS CRIED OUT IN AWE AS HE RELEASED THE ROPE AND HURTLED TOWARDS HIS QUARRY.
ZORZA NEVER SAW HIS PERIL TILL IT WAS TOO LATE. THE ROCKETEER'S BOOTED FOOT CAUGHT THE BARBARIAN LEADER IN THE CHEST, KNOCKING THE BREATH FROM HIS POWERFUL BODY.
AAAAAAH! LOOK AT THAT!
UUUUU-U-UNNN!

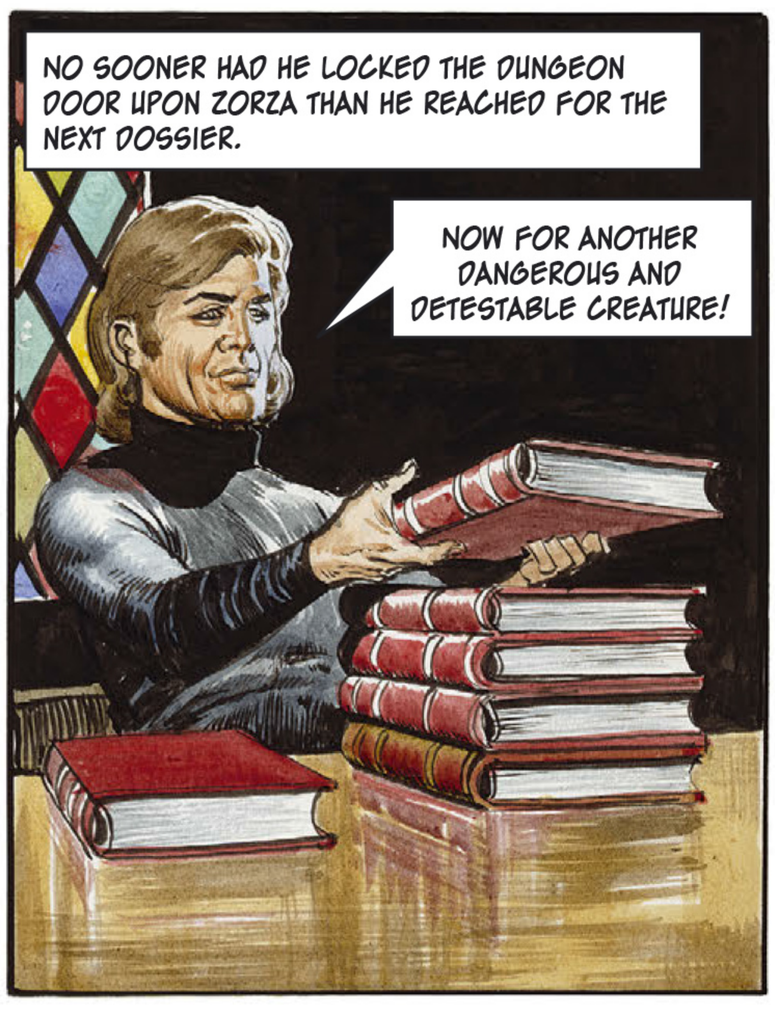
WITH ONE MUSCULAR ARM AROUND HIS UNCONSCIOUS VICTIM, LUKAZ RANN CONTINUED HIS SWING.

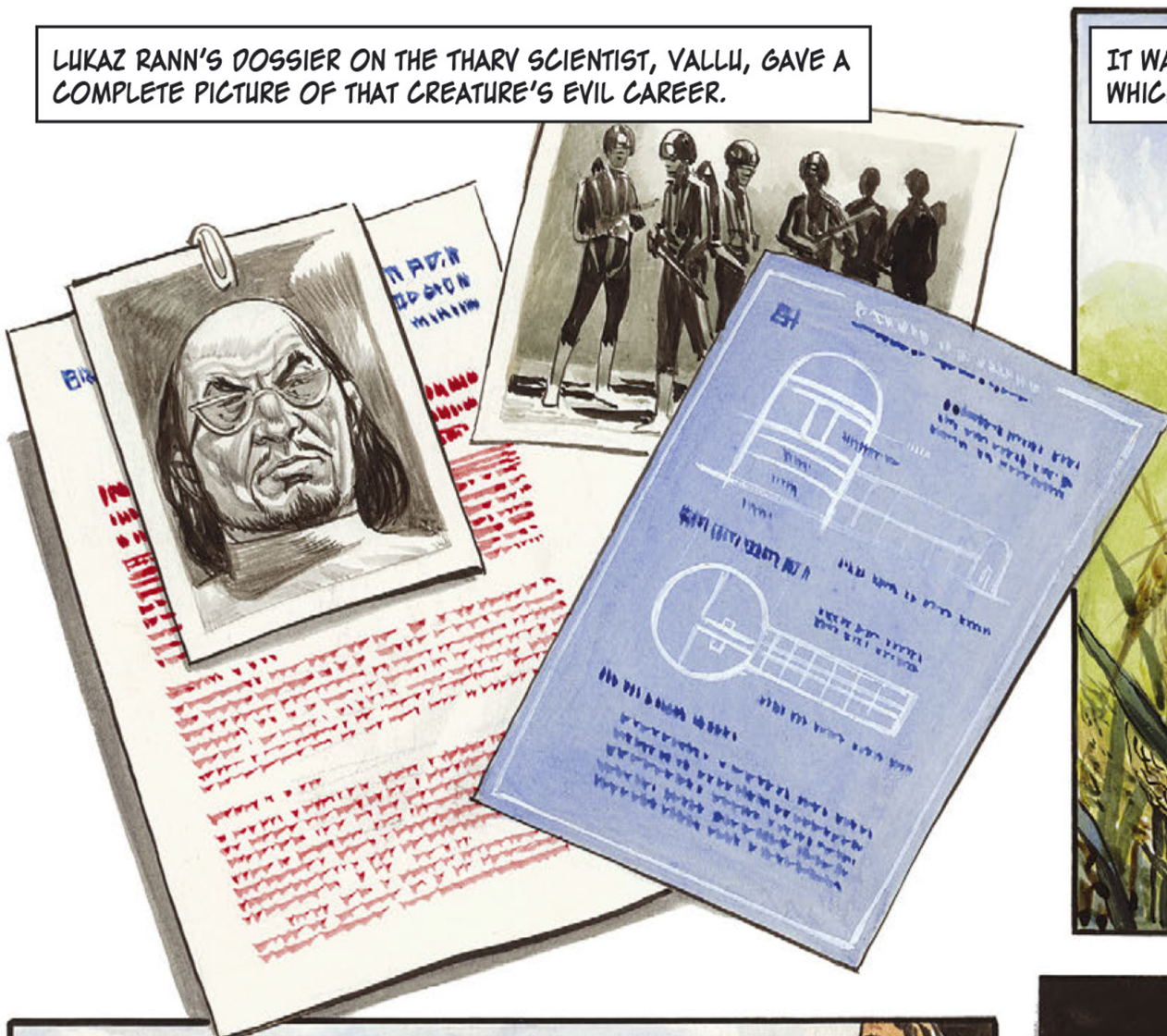
HE LANDED NEATLY ON THE BACK OF A TETHERED KREED...

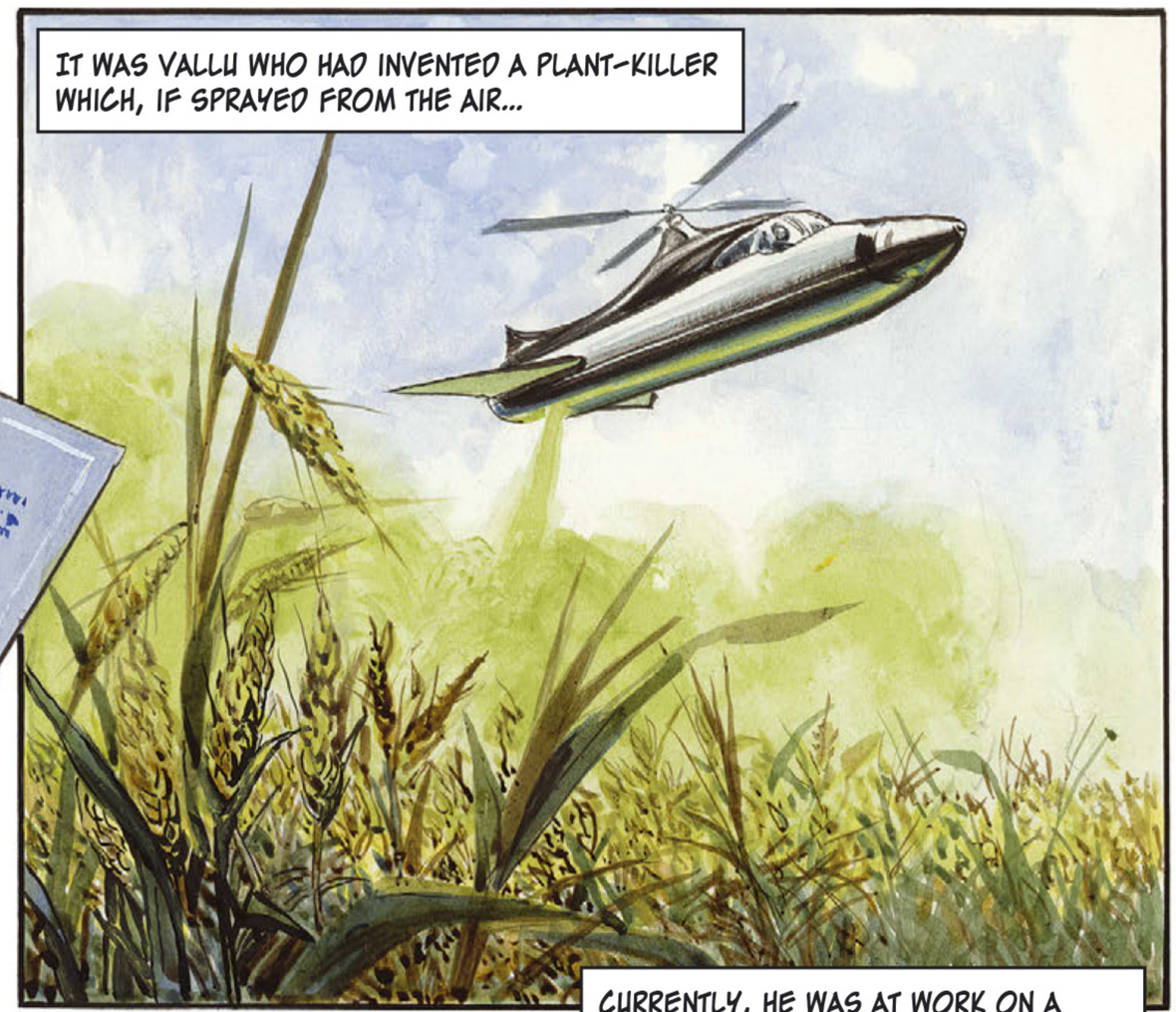
... AND WAS AWAY BEFORE THE DUMBFOUNDED BARBARIANS COULD RAISE A FINGER TO RESCUE THEIR LEADER.

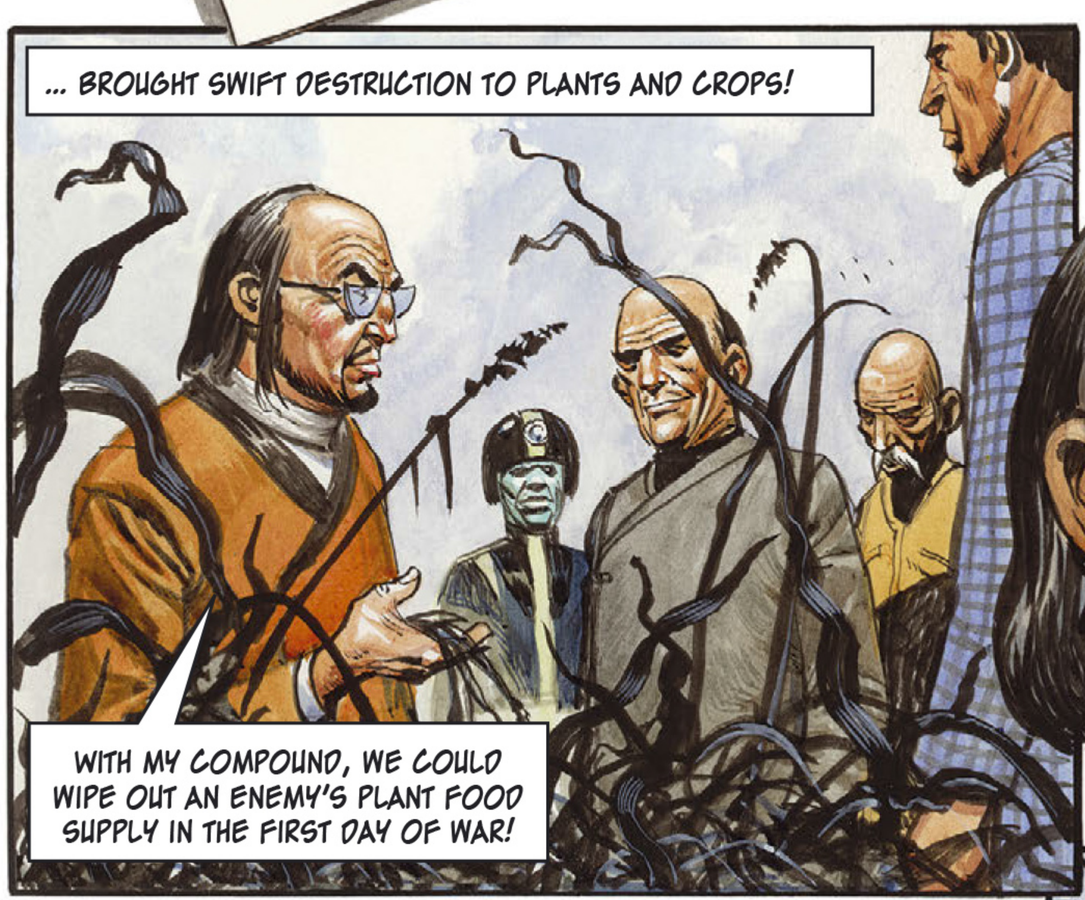
HIS CRAFT WAS WHERE HE HAD LEFT IT.

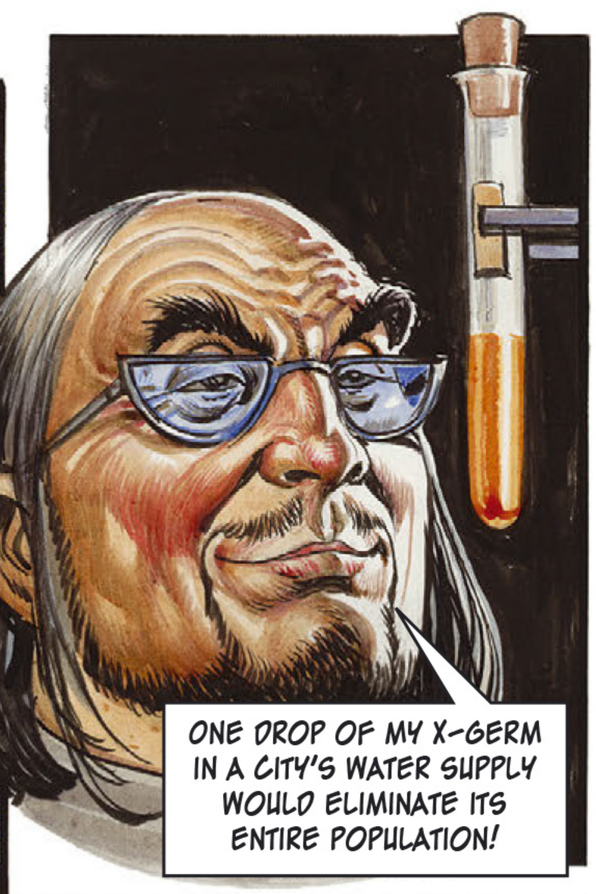
IT'S GOING TO BE A CLOSE RUN THING!

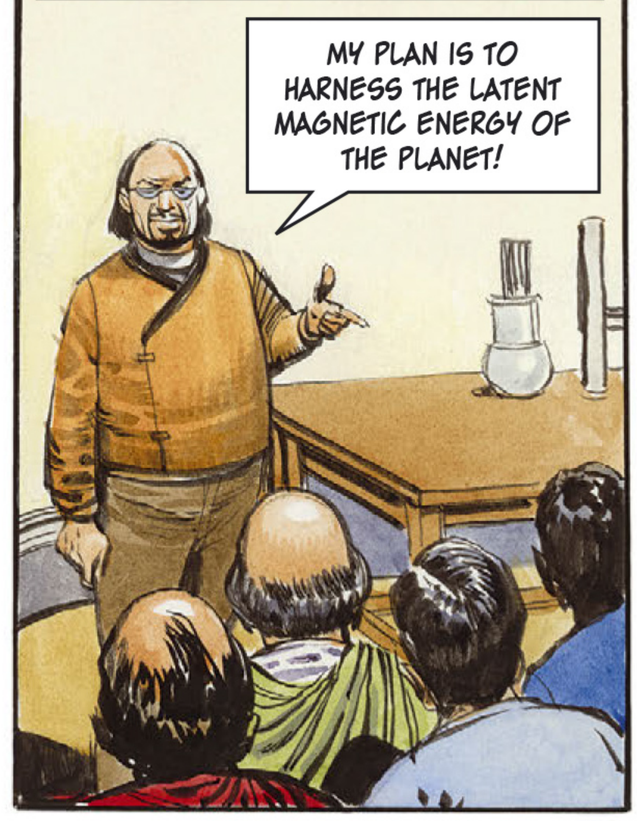


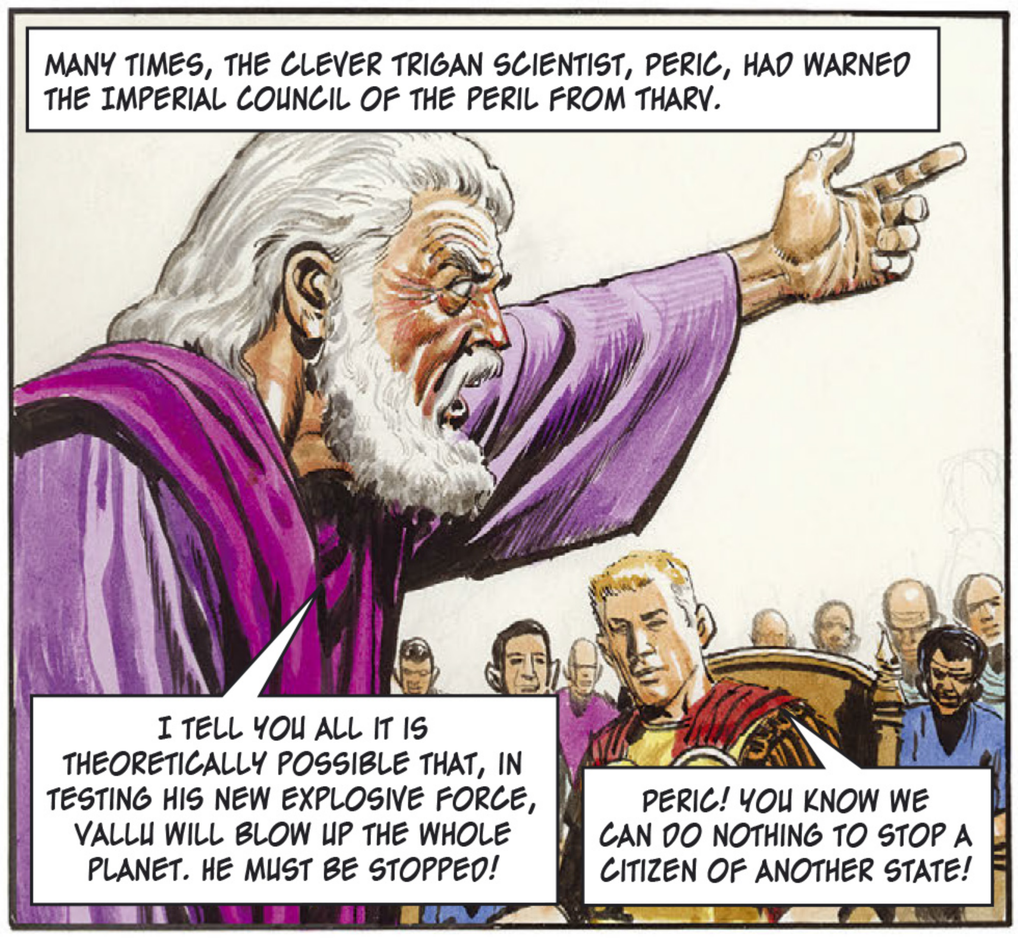

LUKAZ RANN'S DOSSIER ON THE THARV SCIENTIST, VALLU, GAVE A COMPLETE PICTURE OF THAT CREATURE'S EVIL CAREER.

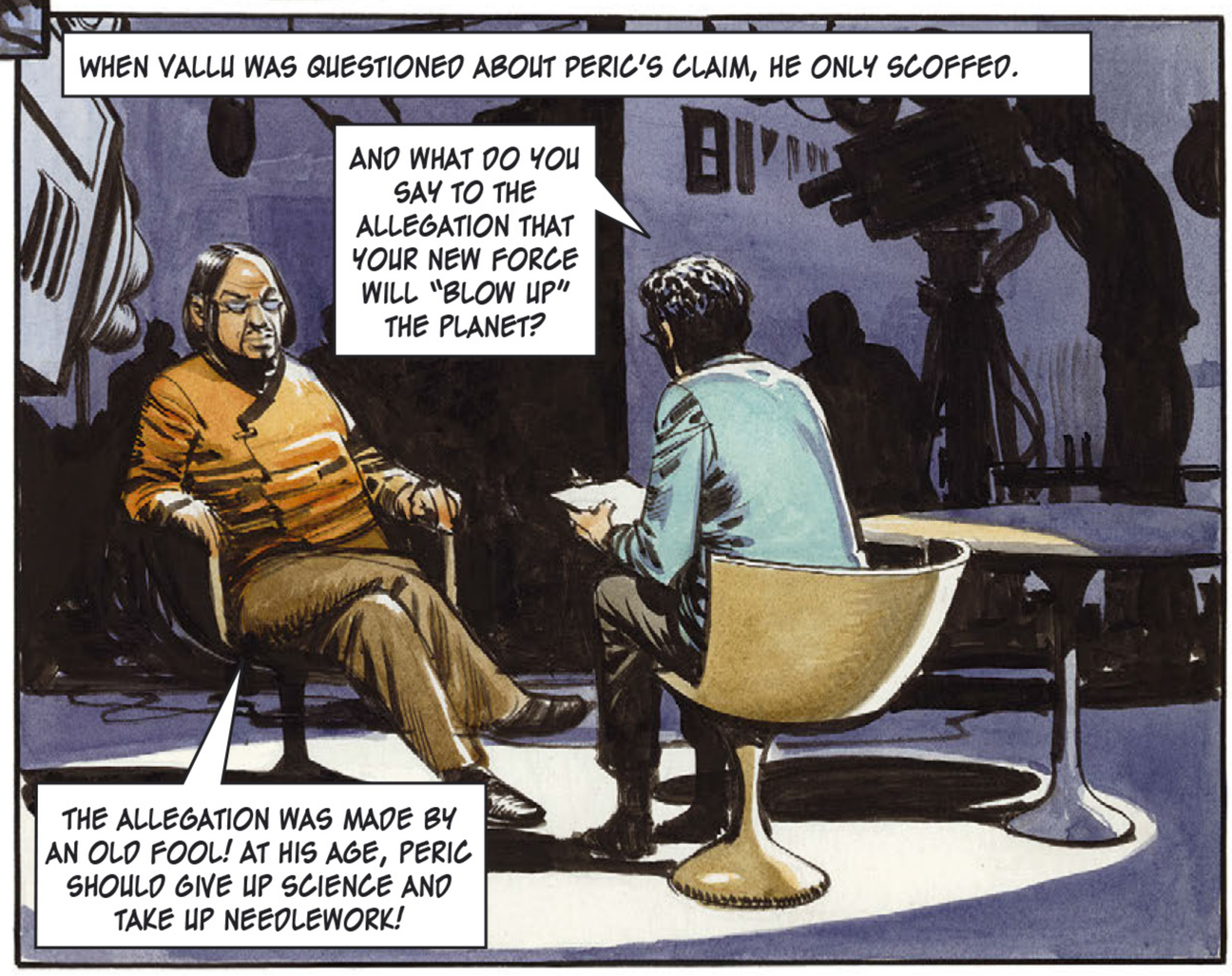

IT WAS VALLU WHO HAD INVENTED A PLANT-KILLER WHICH, IF SPRAYED FROM THE AIR...

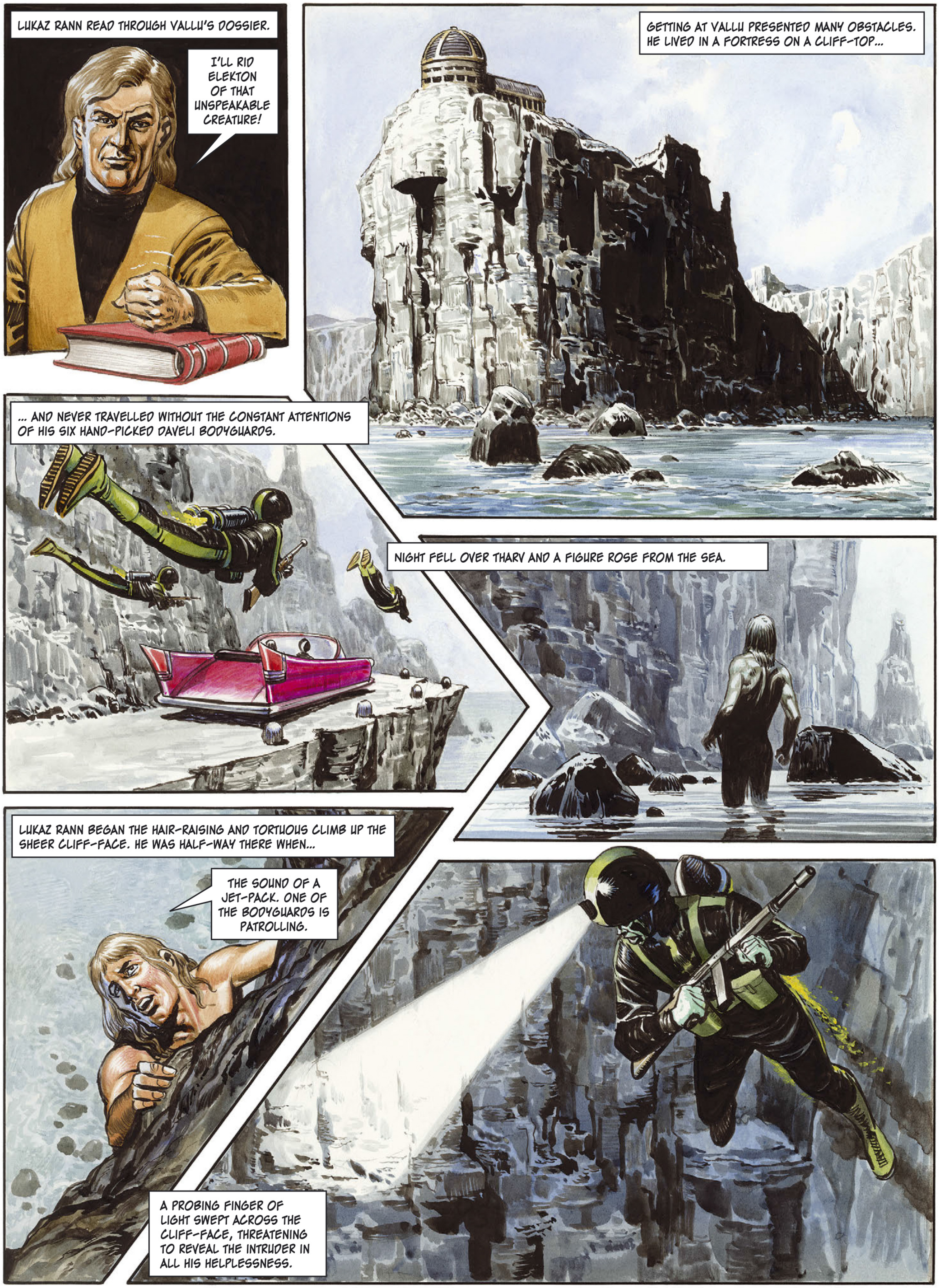

... BROUGHT SWIFT DESTRUCTION TO PLANTS AND CROPS!
WITH MY COMPOUND, WE COULD WIPE OUT AN ENEMY'S PLANT FOOD SUPPLY IN THE FIRST DAY OF WAR!


ONE DROP OF MY X-GERM IN A CITY'S WATER SUPPLY WOULD ELIMINATE ITS ENTIRE POPULATION!

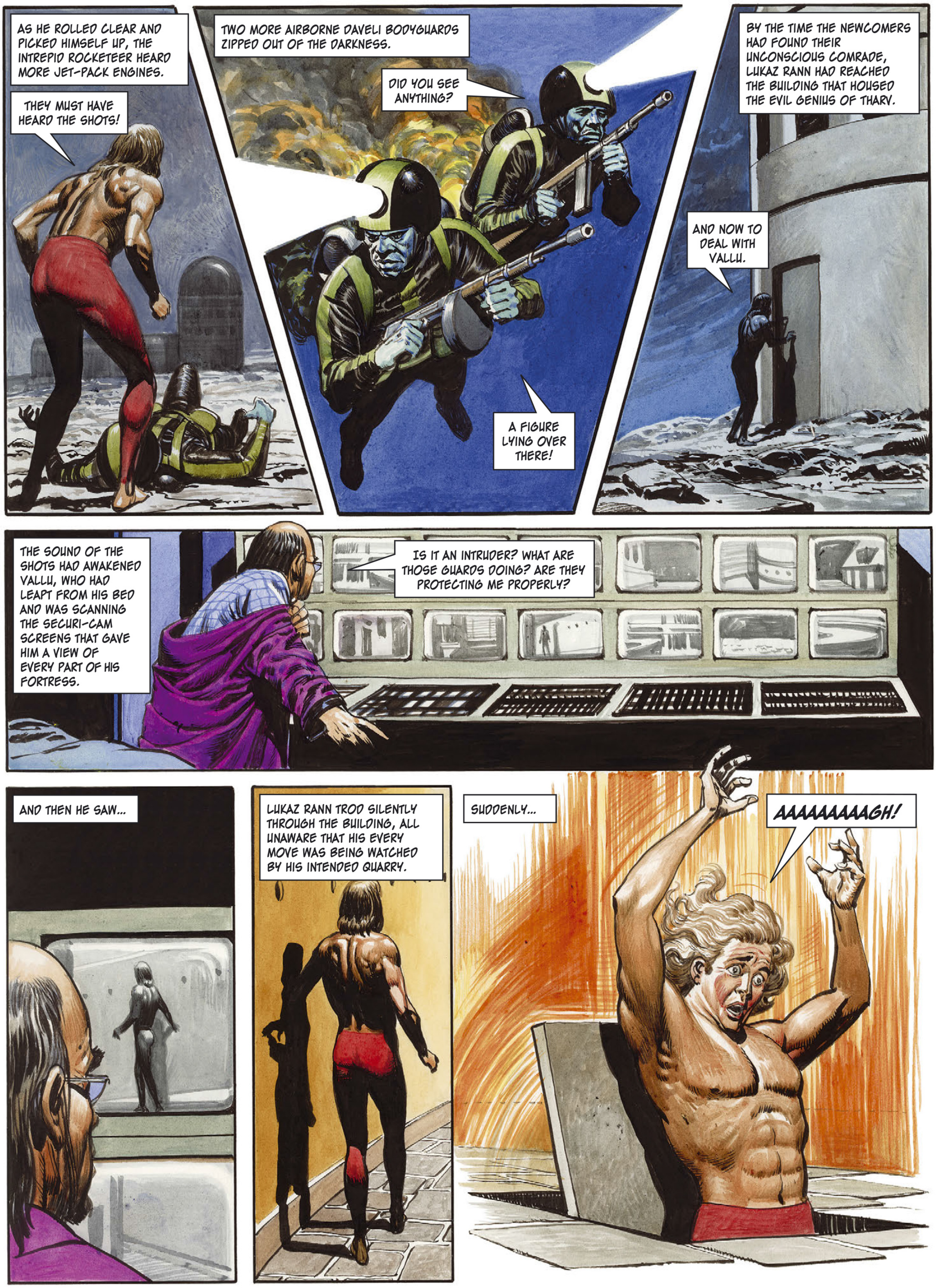

CURRENTLY, HE WAS AT WORK ON A SENSATIONAL NEW EXPLOSIVE FORCE.
MY PLAN IS TO HARNESS THE LATENT MAGNETIC ENERGY OF THE PLANET!

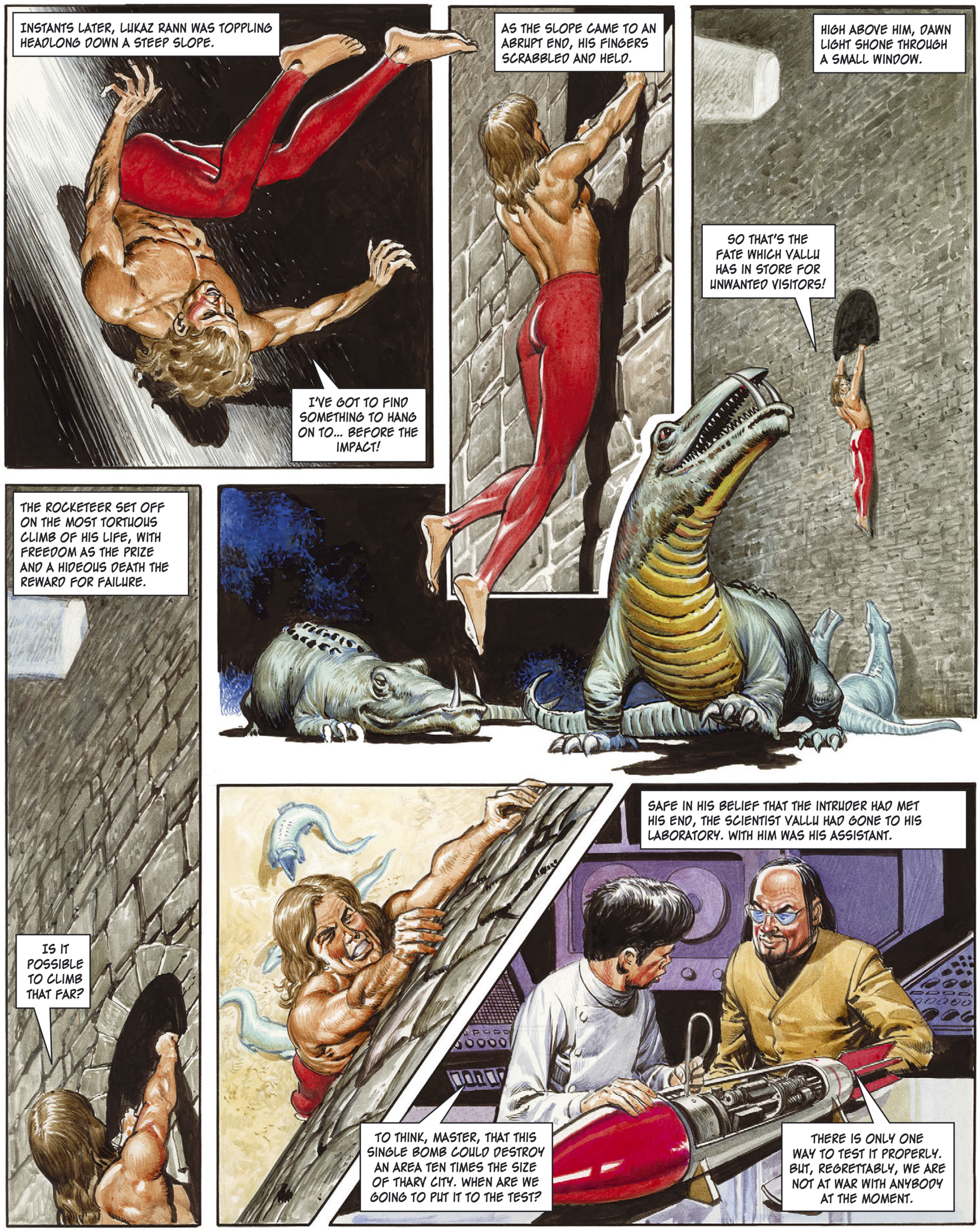

MANY TIMES, THE CLEVER TRIGAN SCIENTIST, PERIC, HAD WARNED THE IMPERIAL COUNCIL OF THE PERIL FROM THARV.
I TELL YOU ALL IT IS THEORETICALLY POSSIBLE THAT, IN TESTING HIS NEW EXPLOSIVE FORCE, VALLU WILL BLOW UP THE WHOLE PLANET. HE MUST BE STOPPED!
PERIC! YOU KNOW WE CAN DO NOTHING TO STOP A CITIZEN OF ANOTHER STATE!


WHEN VALLU WAS QUESTIONED ABOUT PERIC'S CLAIM, HE ONLY SCOFFED.
AND WHAT DO YOU SAY TO THE ALLEGATION THAT YOUR NEW FORCE WILL "BLOW UP" THE PLANET?
THE ALLEGATION WAS MADE BY AN OLD FOOL! AT HIS AGE, PERIC SHOULD GIVE UP SCIENCE AND TAKE UP NEEDLEWORK!

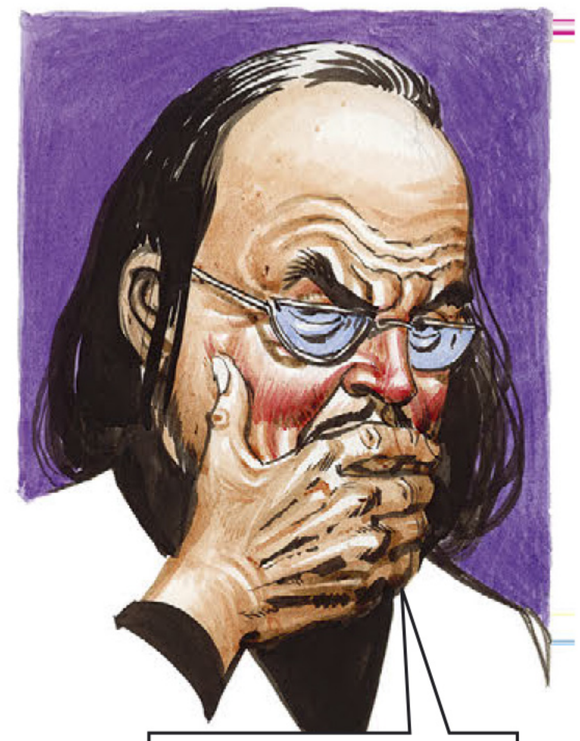

LUKAZ RANN READ THROUGH VALLU'S DOSSIER.
I'LL RID ELEKTON OF THAT UNSPEAKABLE CREATURE!
GETTING AT VALLU PRESENTED MANY OBSTACLES. HE LIVED IN A FORTRESS ON A CLIFF-TOP...
... AND NEVER TRAVELLED WITHOUT THE CONSTANT ATTENTIONS OF HIS SIX HAND-PICKED DAVELI BODYGUARDS.
NIGHT FELL OVER THARV AND A FIGURE ROSE FROM THE SEA.
LUKAZ RANN BEGAN THE HAIR-RAISING AND TORTUOUS CLIMB UP THE SHEER CLIFF-FACE. HE WAS HALF-WAY THERE WHEN...
THE SOUND OF A JET-PACK. ONE OF THE BODYGUARDS IS PATROLLING.
A PROBING FINGER OF LIGHT SWEPT ACROSS THE CLIFF-FACE, THREATENING TO REVEAL THE INTRUDER IN ALL HIS HELPLESSNESS.

THE PROBING FINGER OF LIGHT PLAYED UPON LUKAZ RANN. IT WAS IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWED BY A HAIL OF PROJECTILES.
THE DAVELI GUARD CAME AT HIM, GUN BLAZING.
LUKAZ RANN HAD ONLY ONE CHANCE OF SURVIVAL – TO RISK ALL IN A DEATH-DEFYING LEAP!
HE CONNECTED AND HUNG ON!
ROARING OUT OF CONTROL, THE JET-PACK CARRIED THE TWO BATTLING FIGURES UP OVER THE EDGE OF THE CLIFF.
LUKAZ RANN FELT HIS OPPONENT GO LIMP FROM A LUCKY BLOW. HE REACHED AND SWITCHED OFF THE JET-PACK AND THEY FELL, LOCKED TOGETHER.

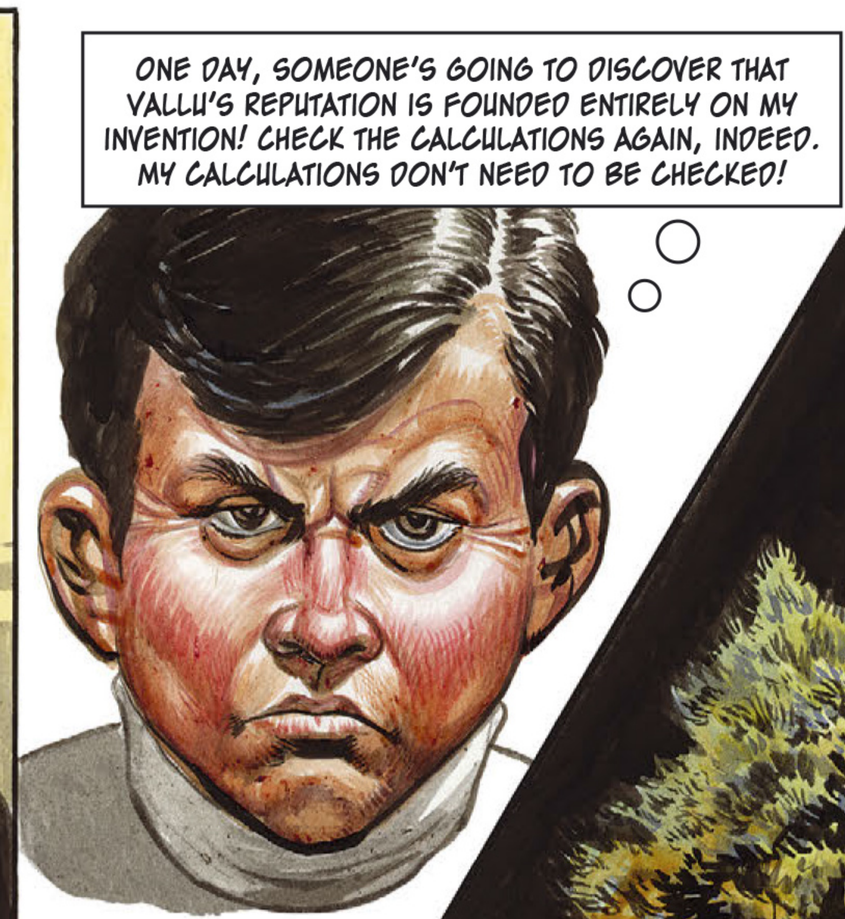

AS HE ROLLED CLEAR AND PICKED HIMSELF UP, THE INTREPID ROCKETEER HEARD MORE JET-PACK ENGINES.
THEY MUST HAVE HEARD THE SHOTS!
TWO MORE AIRBORNE DAVELI BODYGUARDS ZIPPED OUT OF THE DARKNESS.
DID YOU SEE ANYTHING?
A FIGURE LYING OVER THERE!
BY THE TIME THE NEWCOMERS HAD FOUND THEIR UNCONSCIOUS COMRADE, LUKAZ RANN HAD REACHED THE BUILDING THAT HOUSED THE EVIL GENIUS OF THARV.
AND NOW TO DEAL WITH VALLU.
THE SOUND OF THE SHOTS HAD AWAKENED VALLU, WHO HAD LEAPT FROM HIS BED AND WAS SCANNING THE SECURI-CAM SCREENS THAT GAVE HIM A VIEW OF EVERY PART OF HIS FORTRESS.
IS IT AN INTRUDER? WHAT ARE THOSE GUARDS DOING? ARE THEY PROTECTING ME PROPERLY?
AND THEN HE SAW...
LUKAZ RANN TROD SILENTLY THROUGH THE BUILDING, ALL UNAWARE THAT HIS EVERY MOVE WAS BEING WATCHED BY HIS INTENDED QUARRY.
SUDDENLY...
AAAAAAAAAGH!


INSTANTS LATER, LUKAZ RANN WAS TOPPLING HEADLONG DOWN A STEEP SLOPE.
I'VE GOT TO FIND SOMETHING TO HANG ON TO... BEFORE THE IMPACT!
AS THE SLOPE CAME TO AN ABRUPT END, HIS FINGERS SCRABBLED AND HELD.
HIGH ABOVE HIM, DAWN LIGHT SHONE THROUGH A SMALL WINDOW.
SO THAT'S THE FATE WHICH VALLU HAS IN STORE FOR UNWANTED VISITORS!
THE ROCKETEER SET OFF ON THE MOST TORTUOUS CLIMB OF HIS LIFE, WITH FREEDOM AS THE PRIZE AND A HIDEOUS DEATH THE REWARD FOR FAILURE.
IS IT POSSIBLE TO CLIMB THAT FAR?
SAFE IN HIS BELIEF THAT THE INTRUDER HAD MET HIS END, THE SCIENTIST VALLU HAD GONE TO HIS LABORATORY. WITH HIM WAS HIS ASSISTANT.
TO THINK, MASTER, THAT THIS SINGLE BOMB COULD DESTROY AN AREA TEN TIMES THE SIZE OF THARV CITY. WHEN ARE WE GOING TO PUT IT TO THE TEST?
THERE IS ONLY ONE WAY TO TEST IT PROPERLY. BUT, REGRETTABLY, WE ARE NOT AT WAR WITH ANYBODY AT THE MOMENT.

WAR WILL COME SOON ENOUGH. MEANWHILE, WE HAVE TIME TO GO OVER OUR CALCULATIONS, JUST IN CASE.
MASTER, YOU DON'T REALLY BELIEVE THAT NONSENSE OF PERIC'S... THAT OUR BOMB COULD DESTROY THE ENTIRE PLANET?

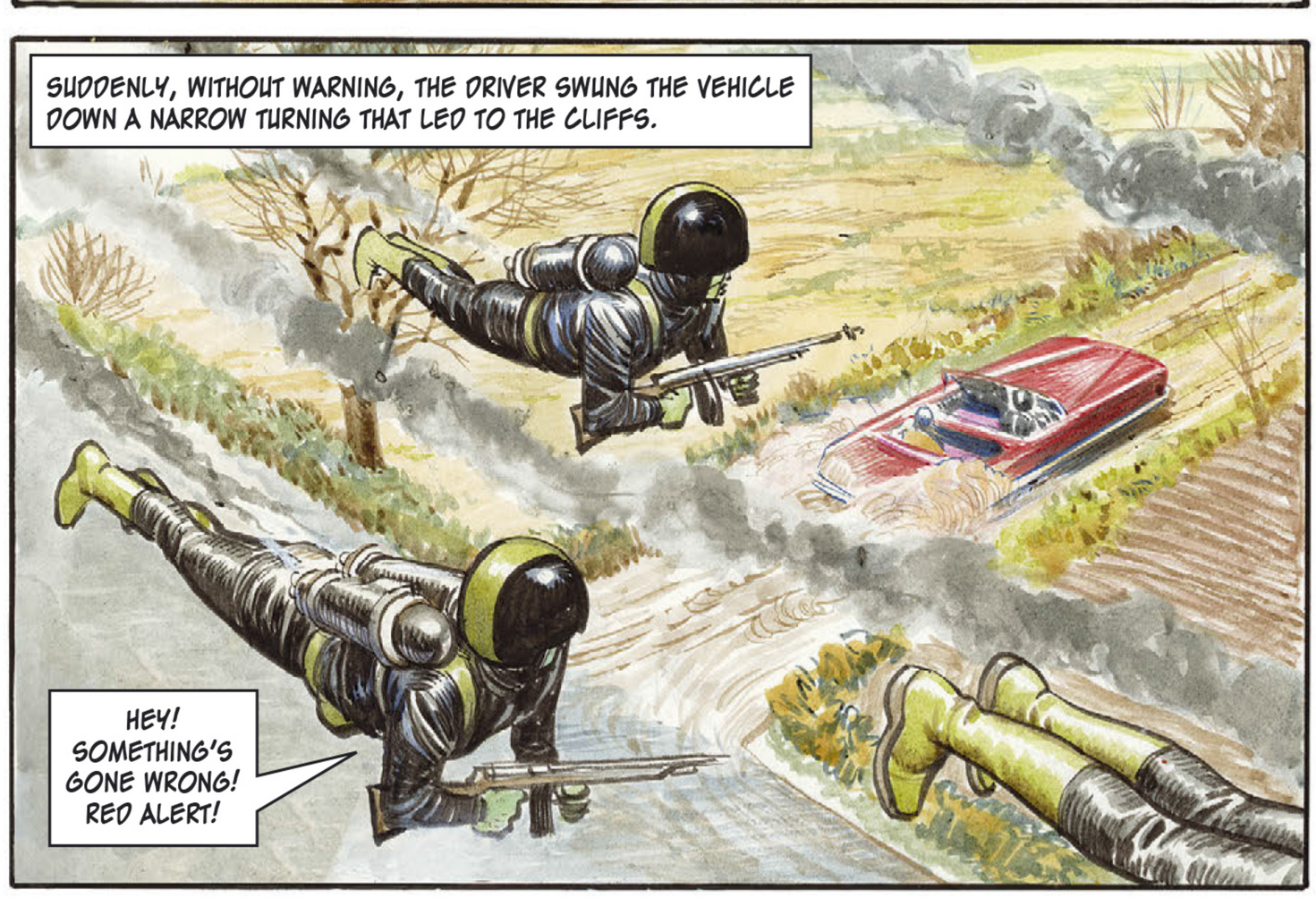

OF COURSE NOT, YOU YOUNG FOOL. ALL THE SAME, THERE'S NO HARM IN MAKING QUITE SURE.

I AM GOING TO THARV CITY FOR A MEETING OF THE SCIENTIFIC ADVISORY COMMITTEE. WHILE I'M GONE, START CHECKING THROUGH THE CALCULATIONS AGAIN.


ONE DAY, SOMEONE'S GOING TO DISCOVER THAT VALLU'S REPUTATION IS FOUNDED ENTIRELY ON MY INVENTION! CHECK THE CALCULATIONS AGAIN, INDEED. MY CALCULATIONS DON'T NEED TO BE CHECKED!

VALLU'S DAVELI DRIVER WAITED FOR HIS MASTER, UNAWARE OF A FIGURE EMERGING FROM A WINDOW BEHIND HIM.

PRESENTLY, THE SCIENTIST SET OFF FOR THE CAPITAL, WATCHED OVER BY HIS AIRBORNE BODY-GUARDS.


SUDDENLY, WITHOUT WARNING, THE DRIVER SWUNG THE VEHICLE DOWN A NARROW TURNING THAT LED TO THE CLIFFS.
HEY! SOMETHING'S GONE WRONG! RED ALERT!

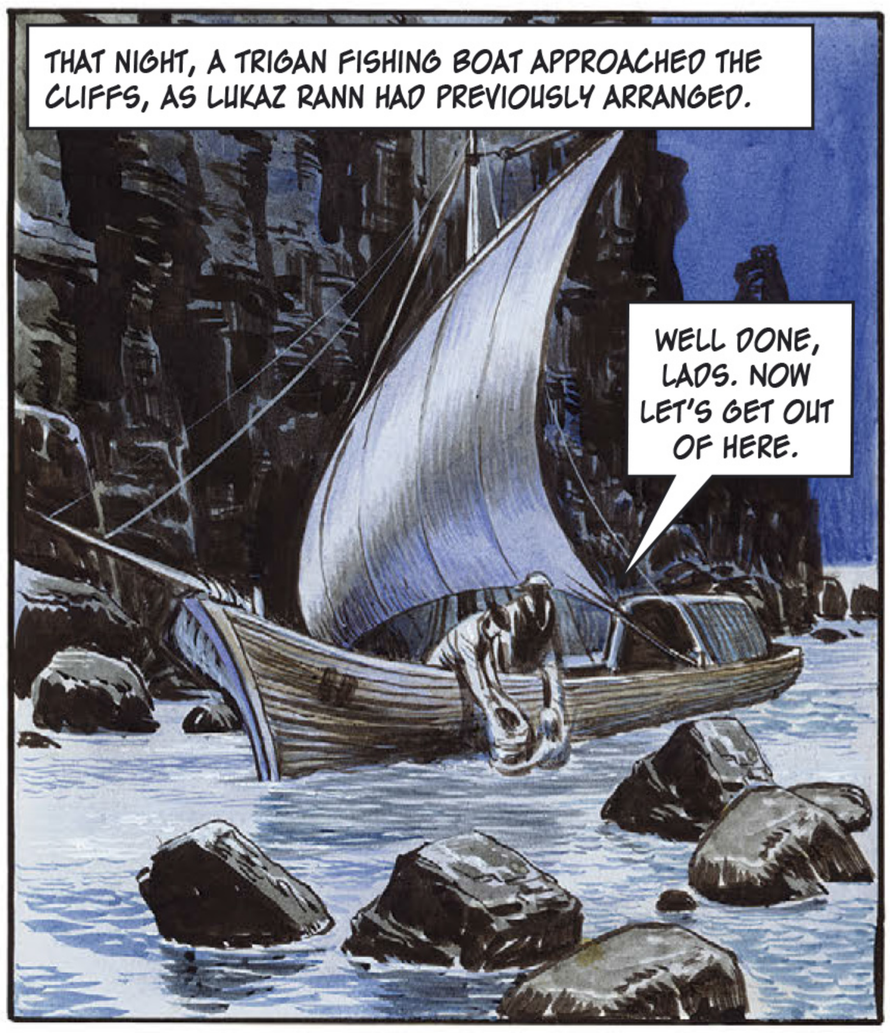
LUKAZ RANN BROUGHT VALLU'S VEHICLE TO A JARRING HALT AT THE CLIFF EDGE AND RASPED AN ORDER.
GET OUT!

VALLU'S BODYGUARDS WERE CLOSING IN FAST.
JUMP!
PLEASE! SPARE ME! I'LL MAKE YOU RICH. ANYTHING CAN BE YOURS, IF ONLY...

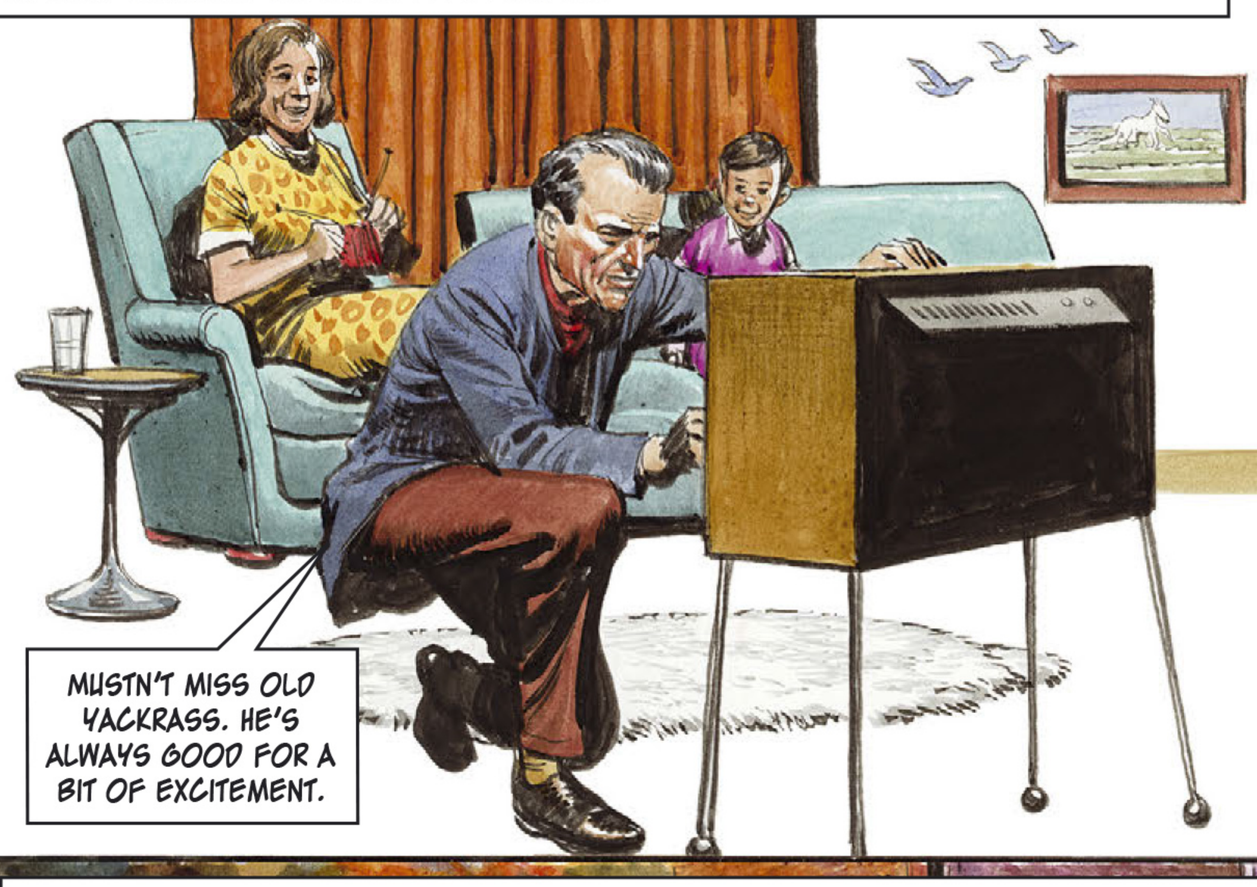
THE GREAT ROCKETEER THRUST HIS VICTIM OVER THE ABYSS AND FOLLOWED AFTER.
EEEEEEEGHH!
BUT THE INTREPID ROCKETEER WAS ALIVE AND SUPPORTING HIS HALF-DROWNED CAPTIVE.
THEY THINK IT'S HOPELESS AND ARE GIVING UP THE SEARCH.

LUKAZ RANN STRUCK THE WATER AND SANK DEEPLY.
VALLU'S BEEN KNOCKED UNCONSCIOUS. I MUST GET HIM TO THE SURFACE BEFORE HE DROWNS. I'D HATE ANYTHING TO HAPPEN TO HIM!

THE BODYGUARDS CRISS-CROSSED THE AREA WHERE THE TWO HAD DISAPPEARED.
NO SIGN OF THEM. THEY MUST HAVE PERISHED.



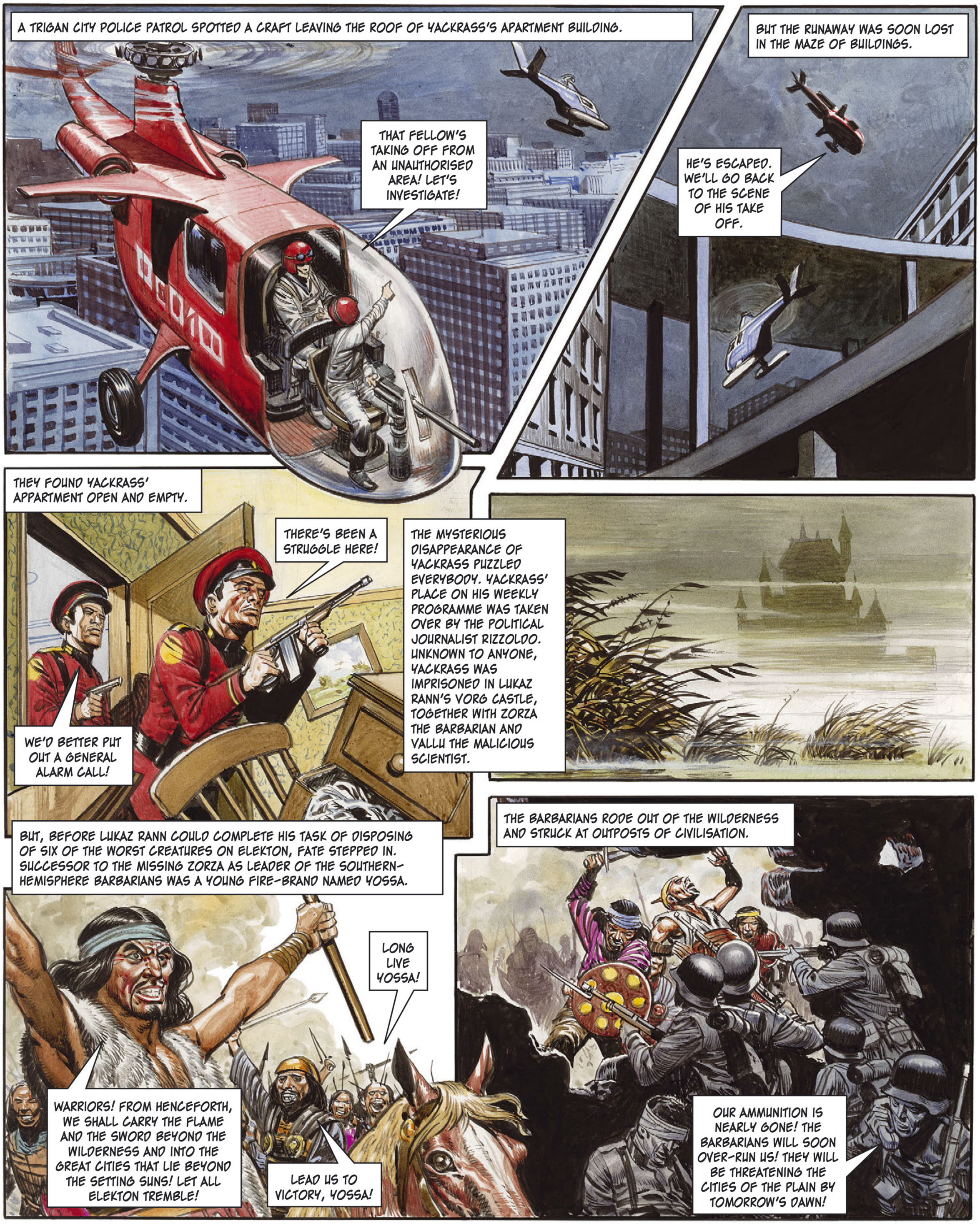
YACKRASS WASS A RABBLE-ROUSING TRIGAN POLITICIAN. HE WAS ALSO THE HIGHEST-PAID PERFORMER ON THE TRIGAN AUDI-VISION NETWORK. AN ESTIMATED FIFTY MILLION VIEWERS SWITCHED ON HIS WEEKLY PROGRAM.



YACKRASS'S TECHNIQUE WAS TO PLAY UPON THE PUBLIC'S FEARS AND PREJUDICES. CURRENTLY, HE WAS BLAZING A CAMPAIGN OF XENOPHOBIA – THE HATRED OF FOREIGNERS.

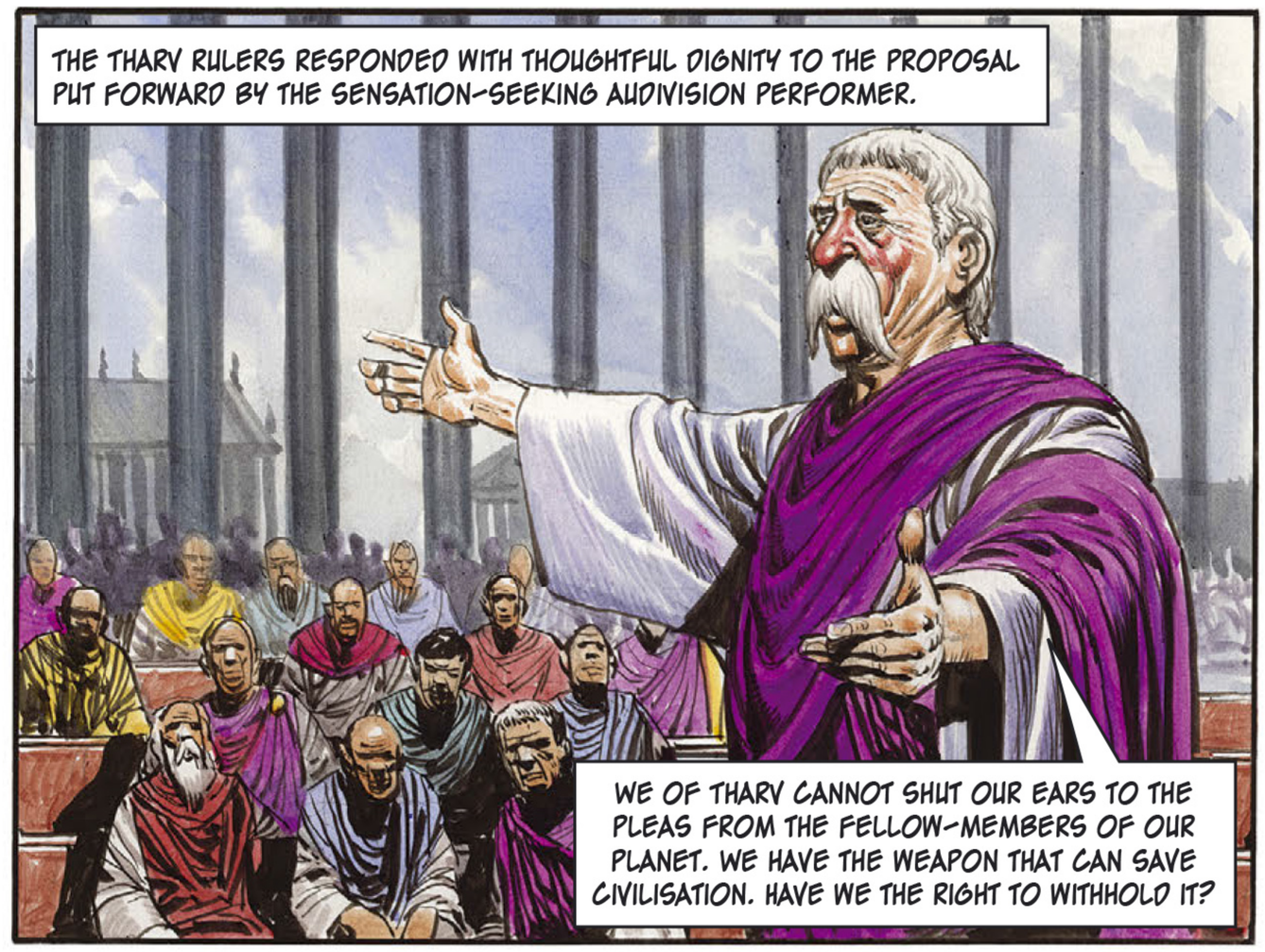
FOLLOWING YACKRASS'S OUTBURST, INNOCENT AND LAW-ABIDING FOREIGNERS – CATONS, LOKANS, THARVIANS AND OTHERS – WERE MOBBED IN THE STREETS AND THEIR PROPERTIES DESTROYED.

YACKRASS HAD CAUSE FOR SELF-CONGRATULATION. THAT VERY DAY, HE HAD LANDED A NEW AUDIVISION CONTRACT AT DOUBLE HIS USUAL FEE.

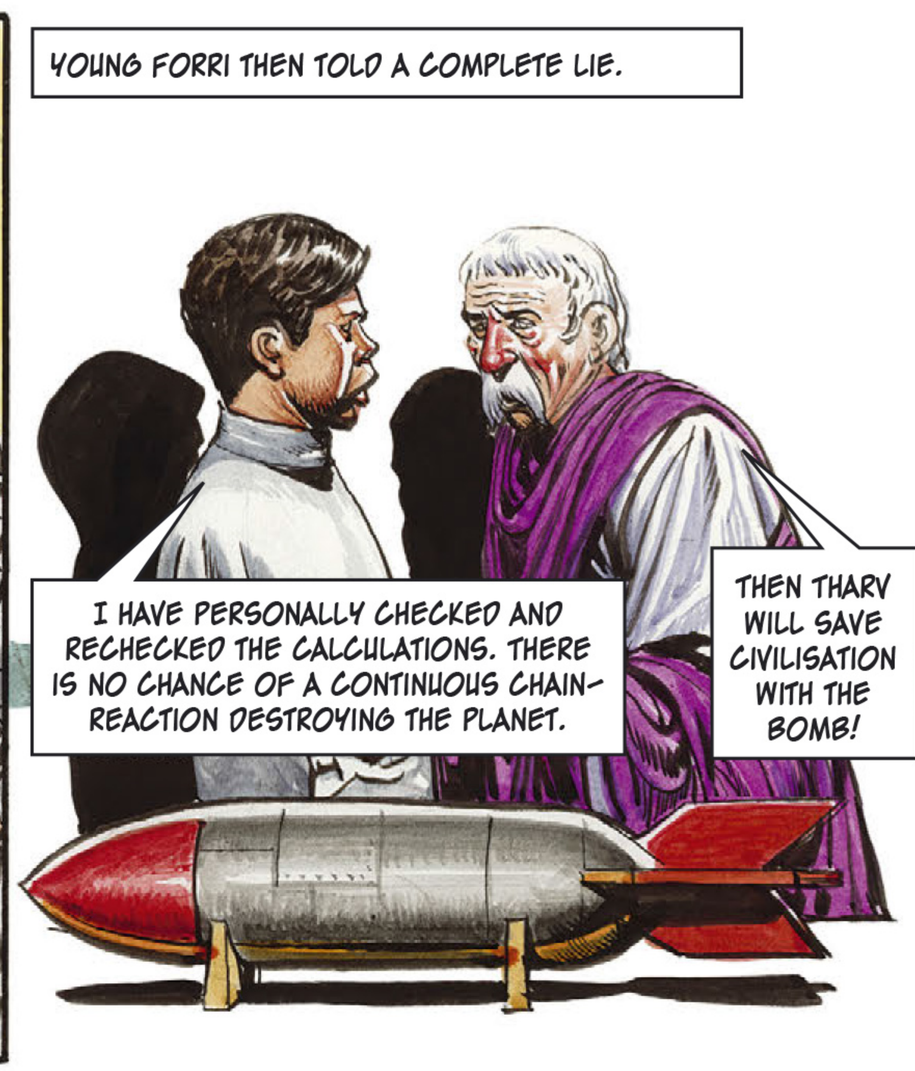

A TRIGAN CITY POLICE PATROL SPOTTED A CRAFT LEAVING THE ROOF OF YACKRASS'S APARTMENT BUILDING.
THAT FELLOW'S TAKING OFF FROM AN UNAUTHORISED AREA! LET'S INVESTIGATE!
BUT THE RUNAWAY WAS SOON LOST IN THE MAZE OF BUILDINGS.
HE'S ESCAPED. WE'LL GO BACK TO THE SCENE OF HIS TAKE OFF.
THEY FOUND YACKRASS' APPARTMENT OPEN AND EMPTY.
THERE'S BEEN A STRUGGLE HERE!
WE'D BETTER PUT OUT A GENERAL ALARM CALL!
THE MYSTERIOUS DISAPPEARANCE OF YACKRASS PUZZLED EVERYBODY. YACKRASS' PLACE ON HIS WEEKLY PROGRAMME WAS TAKEN OVER BY THE POLITICAL JOURNALIST RIZZOLDO. UNKNOWN TO ANYONE, YACKRASS WAS IMPRISONED IN LUKAZ RANN'S VORG CASTLE, TOGETHER WITH ZORZA THE BARBARIAN AND VALLU THE MALICIOUS SCIENTIST.
BUT, BEFORE LUKAZ RANN COULD COMPLETE HIS TASK OF DISPOSING OF SIX OF THE WORST CREATURES ON ELEKTON, FATE STEPPED IN. SUCCESSOR TO THE MISSING ZORZA AS LEADER OF THE SOUTHERN-HEMISPHERE BARBARIANS WAS A YOUNG FIRE-BRAND NAMED YOSSA.
LONG LIVE YOSSA!
WARRIORS! FROM HENCEFORTH, WE SHALL CARRY THE FLAME AND THE SWORD BEYOND THE WILDERNESS AND INTO THE GREAT CITIES THAT LIE BEYOND THE SETTING SUNS! LET ALL ELEKTON TREMBLE!
LEAD US TO VICTORY, YOSSA!
THE BARBARIANS RODE OUT OF THE WILDERNESS AND STRUCK AT OUTPOSTS OF CIVILISATION.
OUR AMMUNITION IS NEARLY GONE! THE BARBARIANS WILL SOON OVER-RUN US! THEY WILL BE THREATENING THE CITIES OF THE PLAIN BY TOMORROW'S DAWN!

NOTHING COULD STOP THE INVADERS. PROUD CITIES WITH ANCIENT CULTURES FELL TO YOSSA'S FIERCE WARRIORS.

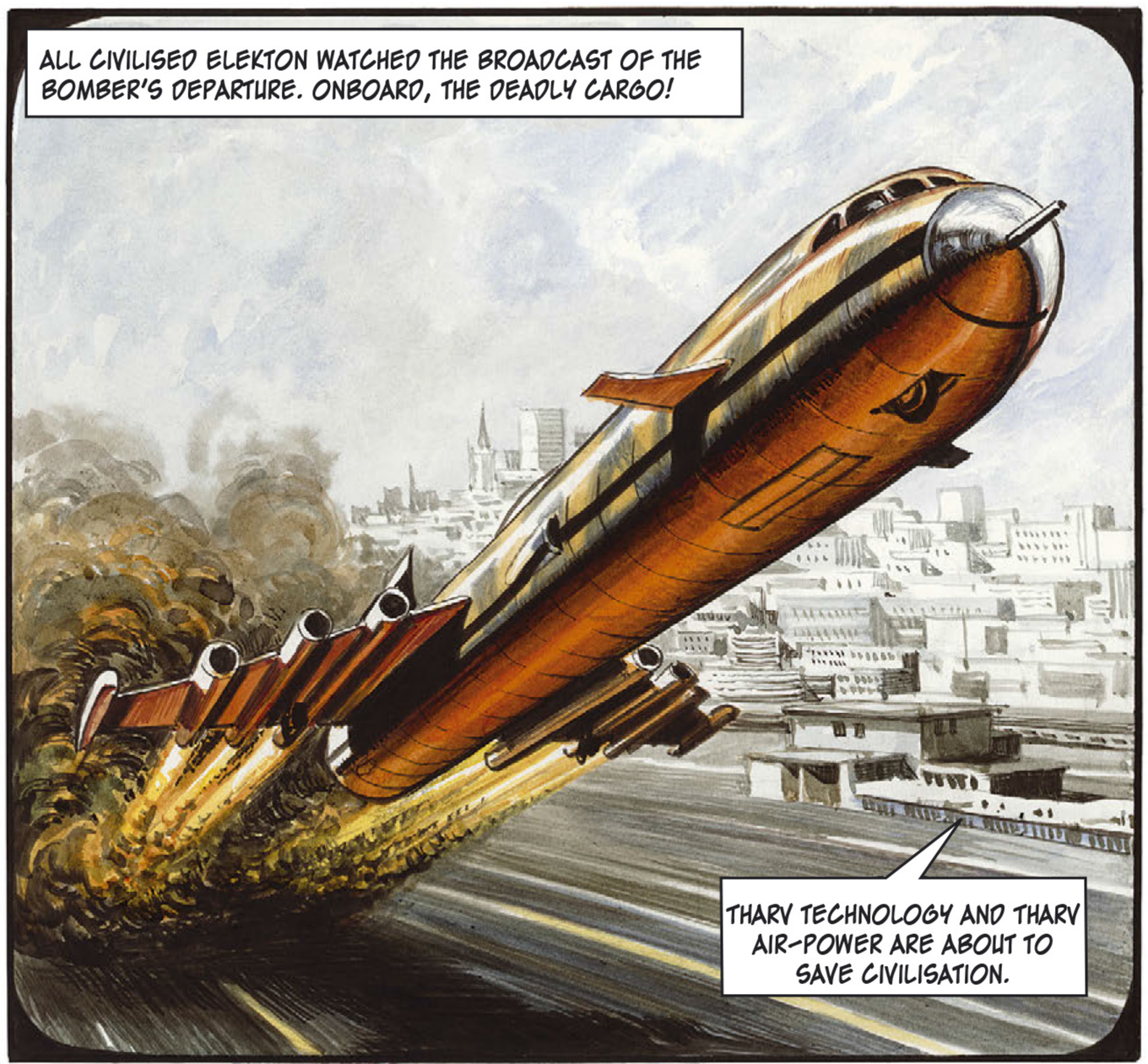
IT SO HAPPENED THAT RIZZOLDO, WHO HAD REPLACED YACKRASS ON THE WEEKLY AUDIVISION PROGRAMME, HAD A SENSATIONAL PROPOSAL FOR DEALING WITH THE BARBARIC MENACE.
THE ONLY HOPE FOR OUR CIVILISATION LIES IN THE HANDS OF THARV! LET THE THARVS UNLEASH THE NEW EXPLOSIVE FORCE DEVISED BY VALLU! IF NECESSARY, LET THEM DESTROY HALF THE PLANET, PROVIDED THAT BARBARITY IS DESTROYED WITH IT!

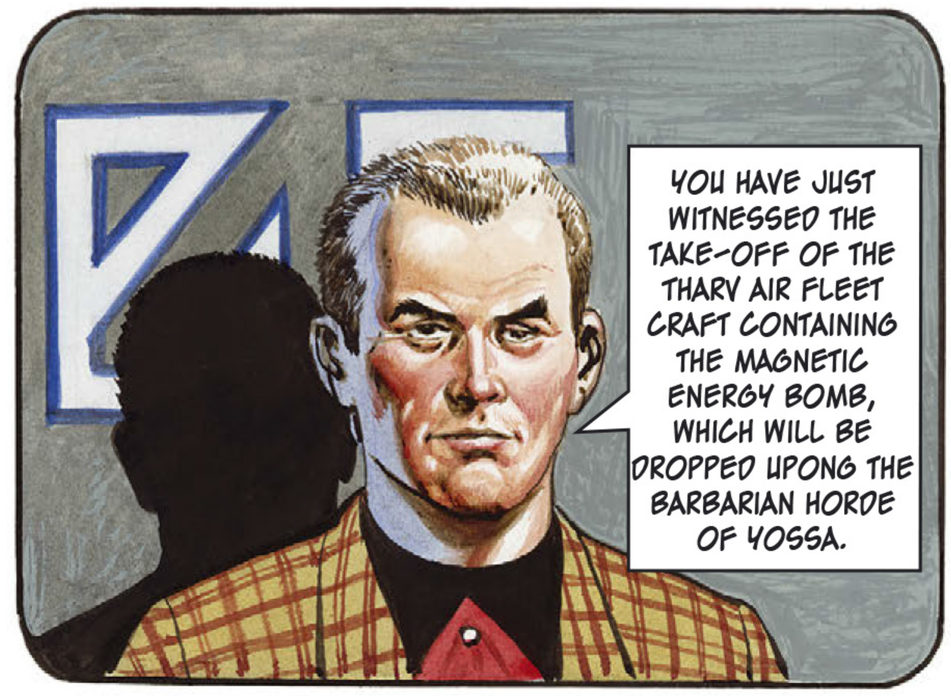

THE THARV RULERS RESPONDED WITH THOUGHTFUL DIGNITY TO THE PROPOSAL PUT FORWARD BY THE SENSATION-SEEKING AUDIVISION PERFORMER.
WE OF THARV CANNOT SHUT OUR EARS TO THE PLEAS FROM THE FELLOW-MEMBERS OF OUR PLANET. WE HAVE THE WEAPON THAT CAN SAVE CIVILISATION. HAVE WE THE RIGHT TO WITHHOLD IT?

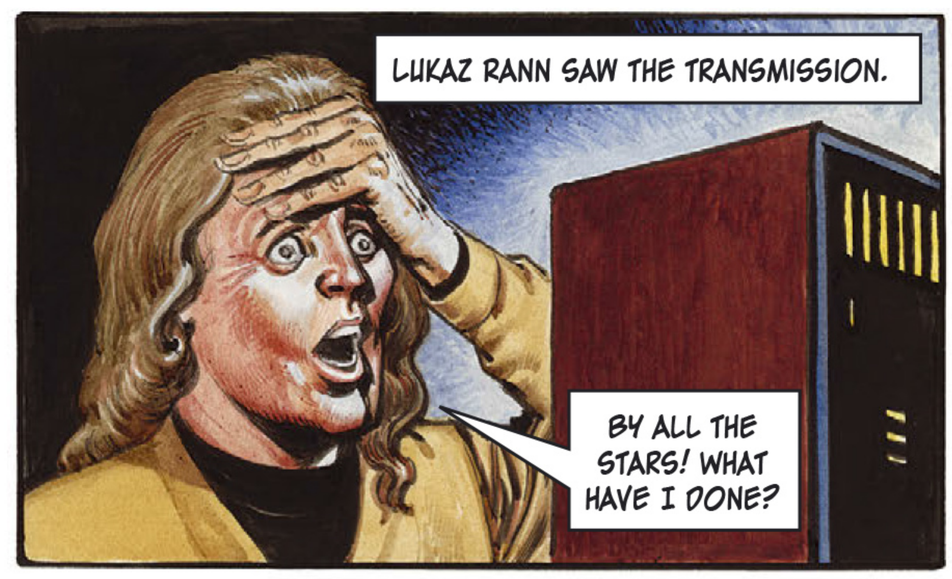
SINCE THE DISAPPEARANCE OF THE SCIENTIST VALLU, HIS ASSISTANT FORRI, HAD TAKEN OVER THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE NEW EXPLOSIVE DEVICE. THE YOUTH WAS QUESTIONED BY THE RULERS.
IT HAS BEEN SAID THAT THERE IS A DANGER OF THE NEW EXPLOSIVE POWER DESTROYING THE WHOLE PLANET. HOW DO YOU ASSESS THAT DANGER, FORRI?
THERE IS NO DANGER, MY LORD.

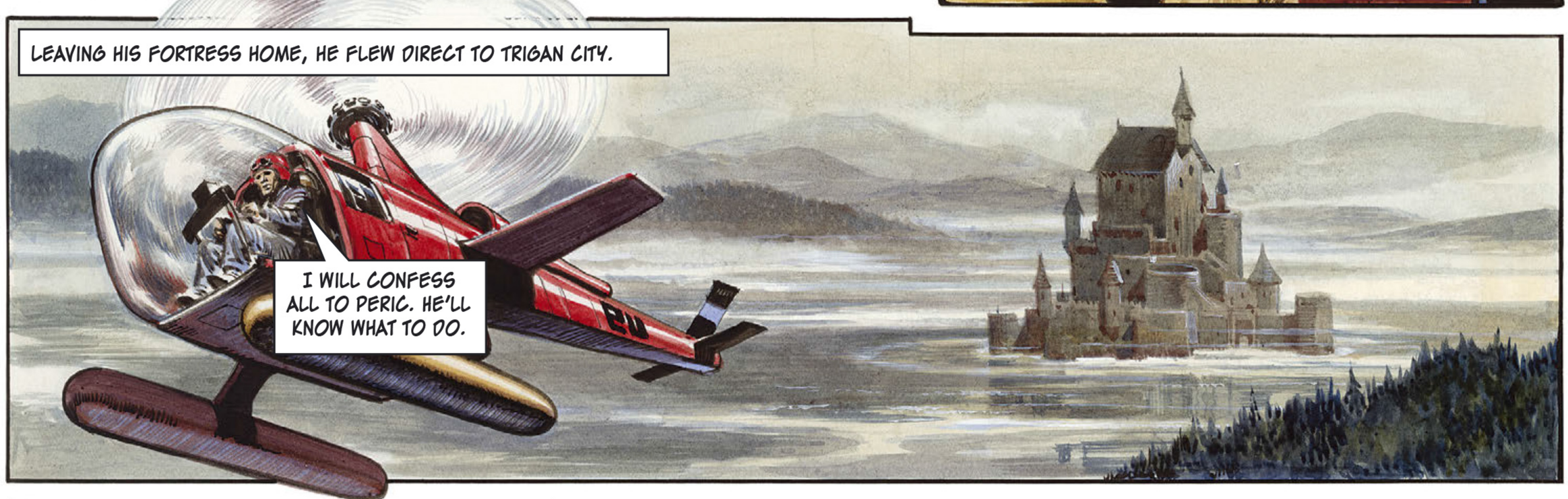

YOUNG FORRI THEN TOLD A COMPLETE LIE.
I HAVE PERSONALLY CHECKED AND RECHECKED THE CALCULATIONS. THERE IS NO CHANCE OF A CONTINUOUS CHAIN-REACTION DESTROYING THE PLANET.
THEN THARV WILL SAVE CIVILISATION WITH THE BOMB!

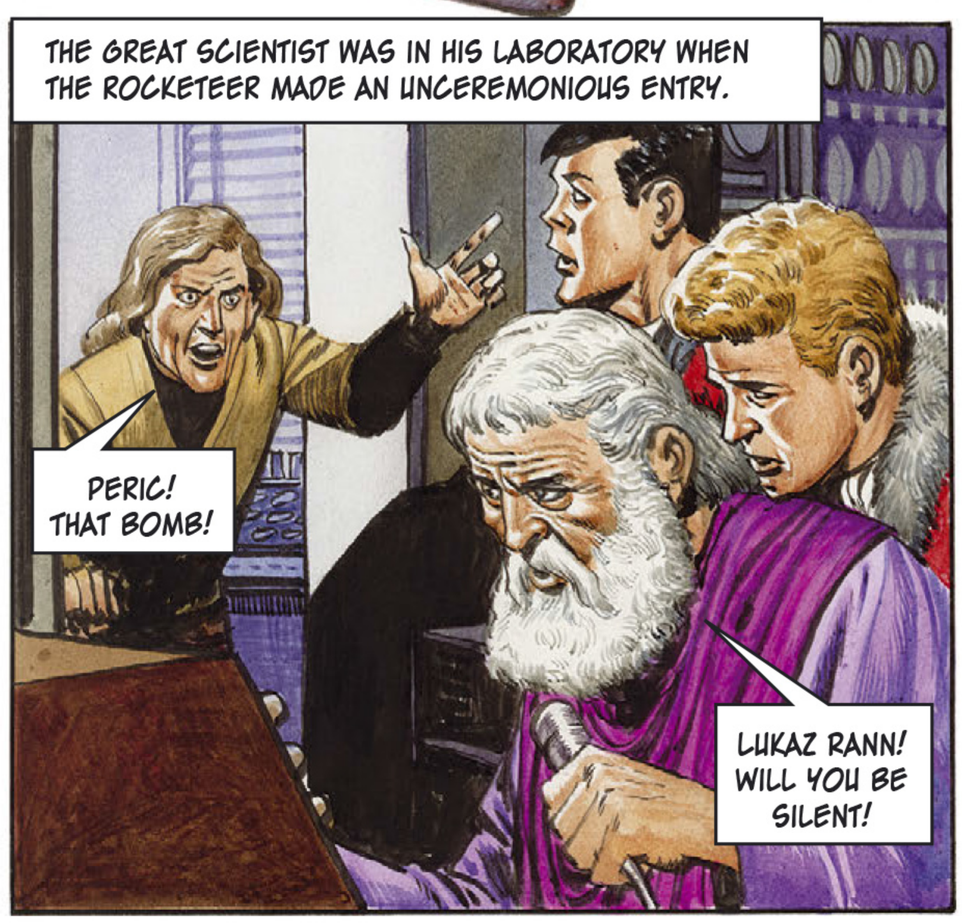
BUT FORRI HAD SUFFERED ONE SLIGHT PANG OF DOUBT, WHICH HE INSTANTLY SUPPRESSED.
THERE WAS NO NEED FOR ME TO CHECK MY CALCULATIONS AGAIN. I GOT THEM RIGHT FIRST TIME... OF COURSE I DID!... DIDN'T I?

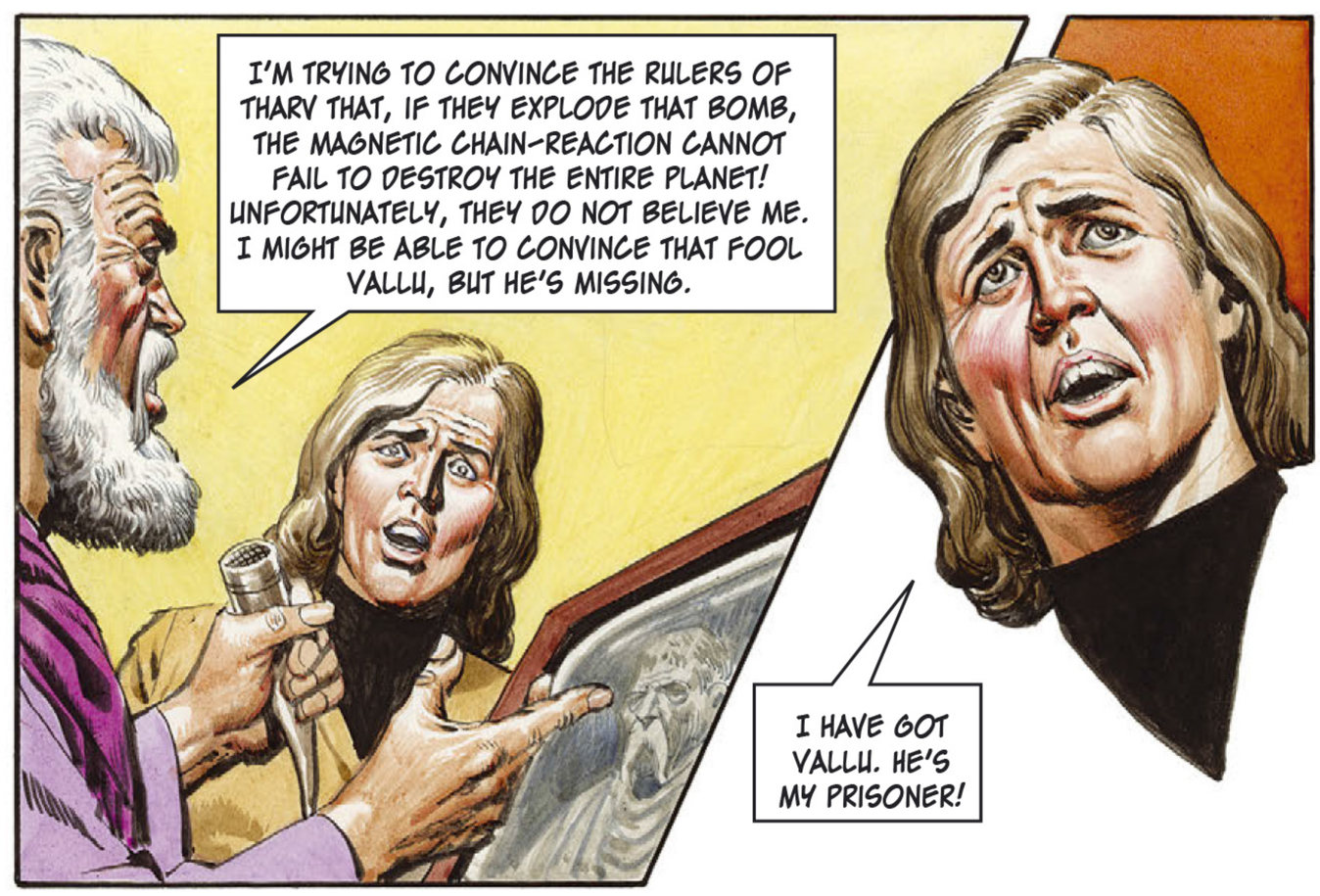

ALL CIVILISED ELEKTON WATCHED THE BROADCAST OF THE BOMBER'S DEPARTURE. ONBOARD, THE DEADLY CARGO!
THARV TECHNOLOGY AND THARV AIR-POWER ARE ABOUT TO SAVE CIVILISATION.


YOU HAVE JUST WITNESSED THE TAKE-OFF OF THE THARV AIR FLEET CRAFT CONTAINING THE MAGNETIC ENERGY BOMB, WHICH WILL BE DROPPED UPONG THE BARBARIAN HORDE OF YOSSA.


LUKAZ RANN SAW THE TRANSMISSION.
BY ALL THE STARS! WHAT HAVE I DONE?


LEAVING HIS FORTRESS HOME, HE FLEW DIRECT TO TRIGAN CITY.
I WILL CONFESS ALL TO PERIC. HE'LL KNOW WHAT TO DO.


THE GREAT SCIENTIST WAS IN HIS LABORATORY WHEN THE ROCKETEER MADE AN UNCEREMONIOUS ENTRY.
PERIC! THAT BOMB!
LUKAZ RANN! WILL YOU BE SILENT!

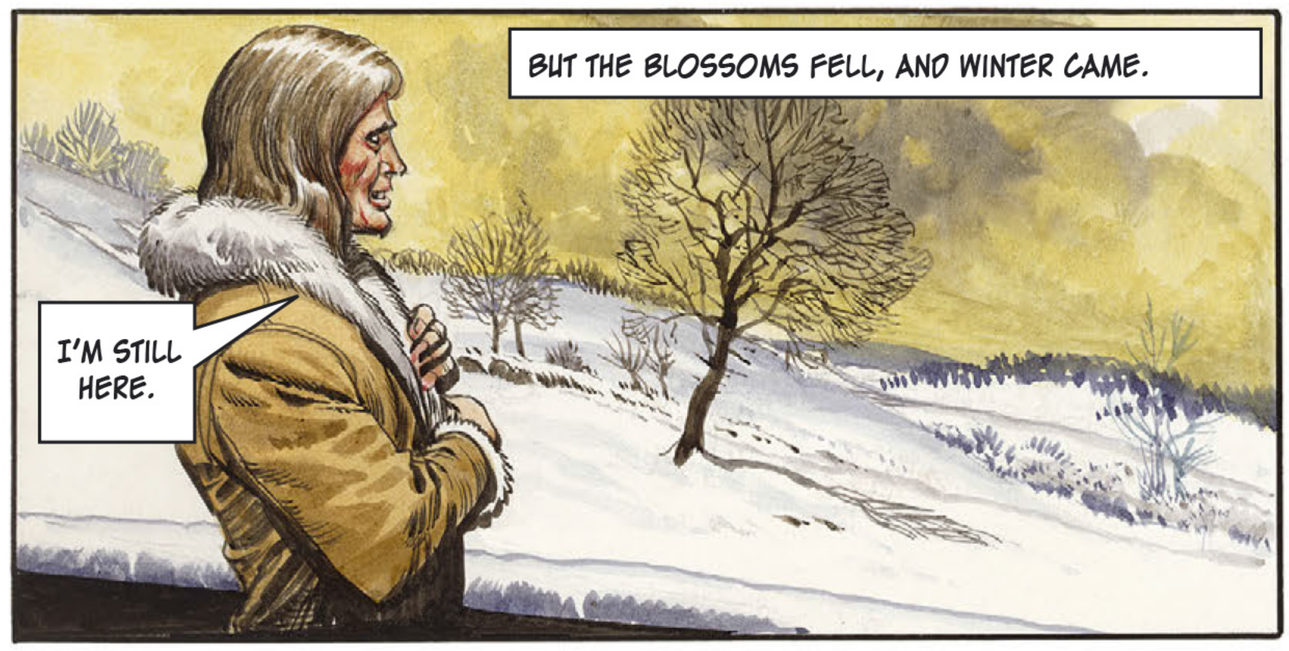

I'M TRYING TO CONVINCE THE RULERS OF THARV THAT, IF THEY EXPLODE THAT BOMB, THE MAGNETIC CHAIN-REACTION CANNOT FAIL TO DESTROY THE ENTIRE PLANET! UNFORTUNATELY, THEY DO NOT BELIEVE ME. I MIGHT BE ABLE TO CONVINCE THAT FOOL VALLU, BUT HE'S MISSING.
I HAVE GOT VALLU. HE'S MY PRISONER!

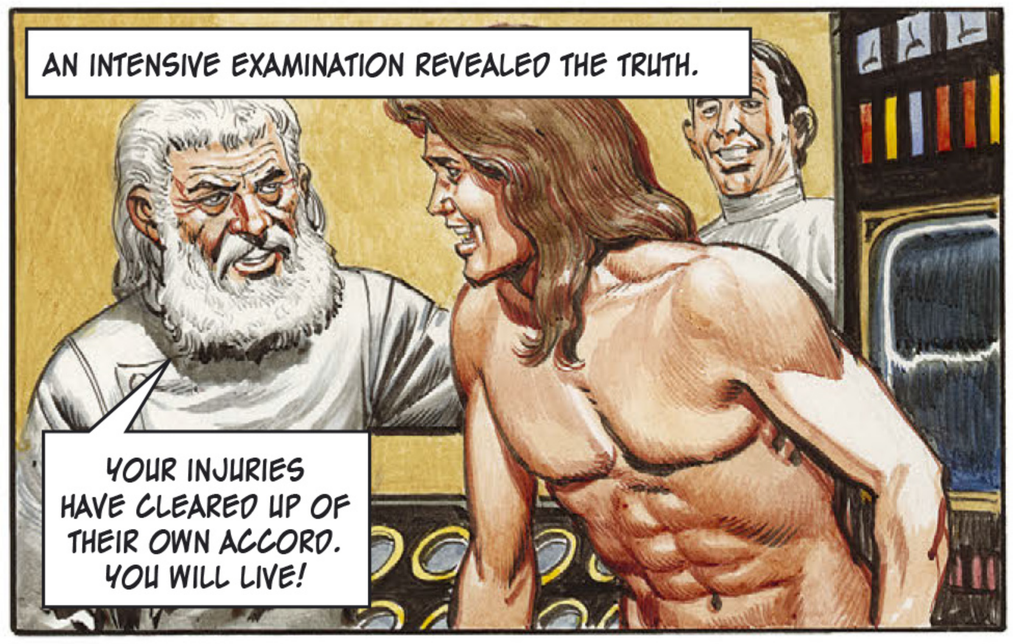
HE CONFESSED EVERYTHING!
BEFORE I MET MY END, I WAS DETERMINED TO LEAVE ELEKTON A BETTER PLACE. SO I CAPTURED ZORZA, THE BARBARIAN! VALLU, THE EVIL SCIENTIST! YACKRASS, THE SPREADER OF HATRED!
YOU DECIDE TO ACT AS IF YOU WERE SOME KIND OF GOD AND WHAT HAPPENS? ZORZA'S SUCCESSOR THREATENS CIVILISATION, YACKRASS'S REPLACEMENT PROPOSES DROPPING THE BOMB AND VALLU'S ASSISTANT TELLS EVERYONE THAT IT'S PERFECTLY SAFE!
AFTER THAT, MATTERS MOVED SWIFTLY. TRIGAN GUARDS BURST OPEN THE DOOR OF THE PRISONERS' DUNGEON.
ON YOUR FEET! YOU, VALLU, ARE COMING TO TRIGAN CITY.
A SHORT DISCUSSION WITH PERIC CONVINCED THE THARV SCIENTIST OF ONE THING.
YOU'VE STUDIED MY CALCULATIONS. DO YOU NOT NOW SEE THAT YOUR CONFOUNDED BOMB IS GOING TO DEVASTATE THE ENTIRE PLANET?
YOU'RE RIGHT, PERIC! I MUST CONTACT THARV AT ONCE! THAT BOMBING-CRAFT MUST BE BROUGHT BACK!
BUT EVEN AT THAT MOMENT, THE HUGE THARV CRAFT WAS PASSING OVER THE MASSED HORDE OF BARBARIANS ON THEIR TRAIL OF CONQUEST AND DESTRUCTION.
DON LAWRENCE.
AND THE BOMB WAS DROPPED!

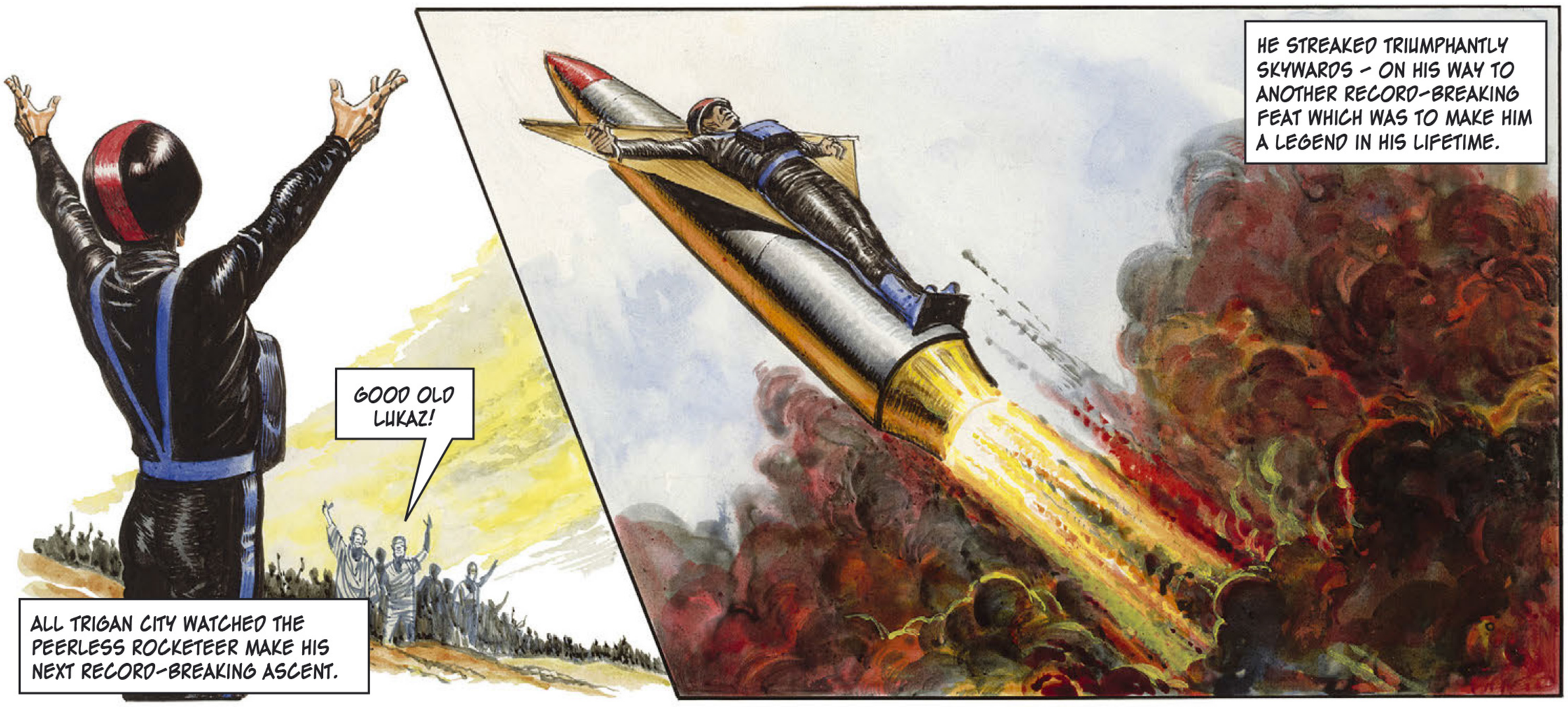
THE BOMB LANDED CLOSE BY THE BARBARIAN HORDE AND SENT UP A SMALL SHOWER OF SAND AND DIRT.
THE MESSAGE WAS FLASHED BACK FROM THE CRAFT THAT HAD DELIVERED THE PROJECTILE...
IT HASN'T GONE OFF!
NEWS SOON REACHED PERIC'S LABORATORY IN TRIGAN CITY. HE TURNED TO VALLU AND HIS ASSISTANT FORRI.
LET ALL ELEKTON THANK THE STARS THAT YOU TWO WERE NOT COMPETENT ENOUGH TO GET THE DETONATING MECHANISM RIGHT. IF YOU HAD, IT WOULD HAVE BEEN THE END OF THE PLANET.
IT WAS EMPEROR TRIGO WHO VOICED THE QUESTION THAT WAS ON EVERYONE'S LIPS...
ELEKTON HAS BEEN SPARED THE BOMB, BUT WHAT ABOUT THE BARBARIANS? WHAT ABOUT YOSSA?
THE CAPTIVE ZORZA ANSWERED HIM...
JUST SET ME FREE, MAJESTY. I'LL HANDLE THAT YOUNG FIREBRAND.
THE BARBARIANS WERE DEVASTATING THE OUTSKIRTS OF THE TRIGAN EMPIRE WHEN THEY ESPIED A FAMILIAR FIGURE.
BEHOLD, YOSSA! THE MIGHTY ZORZA HAS RETURNED TO US!
ZORZA!

YOSSA WAS SILENT AND CONTRITE BEFORE HIS RIGHTFUL CHIEF.
YOU HAVE HAD YOUR BRIEF HOUR OF GLORY, AND NOW IT'S OVER, MY CHILDREN, GO BACK TO THE WILDERNESS, WHERE IT'S SAFE.

YACKRASS WAS BACK ON HIS WEEKLY AUDIVISION PROGRAMME, BUT MUCH CHANGED.
THE EVENTS OF THE LAST FEW DAYS HAVE TAUGHT US ALL A LESSON, MY FRIENDS. THE PEOPLE OF THIS PLANET MUST LEARN TO LIVE TOGETHER AMICABLY.
THE MONTHS PASSED. LUKAZ RANN LIVED QUIETLY IN HIS TRIGAN CITY VILLA, WAITING FOR THE END...
I SHALL NOT LIVE TO SEE THE BLOSSOMS FALL.


BUT THE BLOSSOMS FELL, AND WINTER CAME.
I'M STILL HERE.


AN INTENSIVE EXAMINATION REVEALED THE TRUTH.
YOUR INJURIES HAVE CLEARED UP OF THEIR OWN ACCORD. YOU WILL LIVE!


GOOD OLD LUKAZ!
ALL TRIGAN CITY WATCHED THE PEERLESS ROCKETEER MAKE HIS NEXT RECORD-BREAKING ASCENT.
HE STREAKED TRIUMPHANTLY SKYWARDS - ON HIS WAY TO ANOTHER RECORD-BREAKING FEAT WHICH WAS TO MAKE HIM A LEGEND IN HIS LIFETIME.

LIV

THE TRIGAN EMPIRE

TORGA'S MIND CONTROLLER

Originally published in ***Look and Learn*** 709 - 717

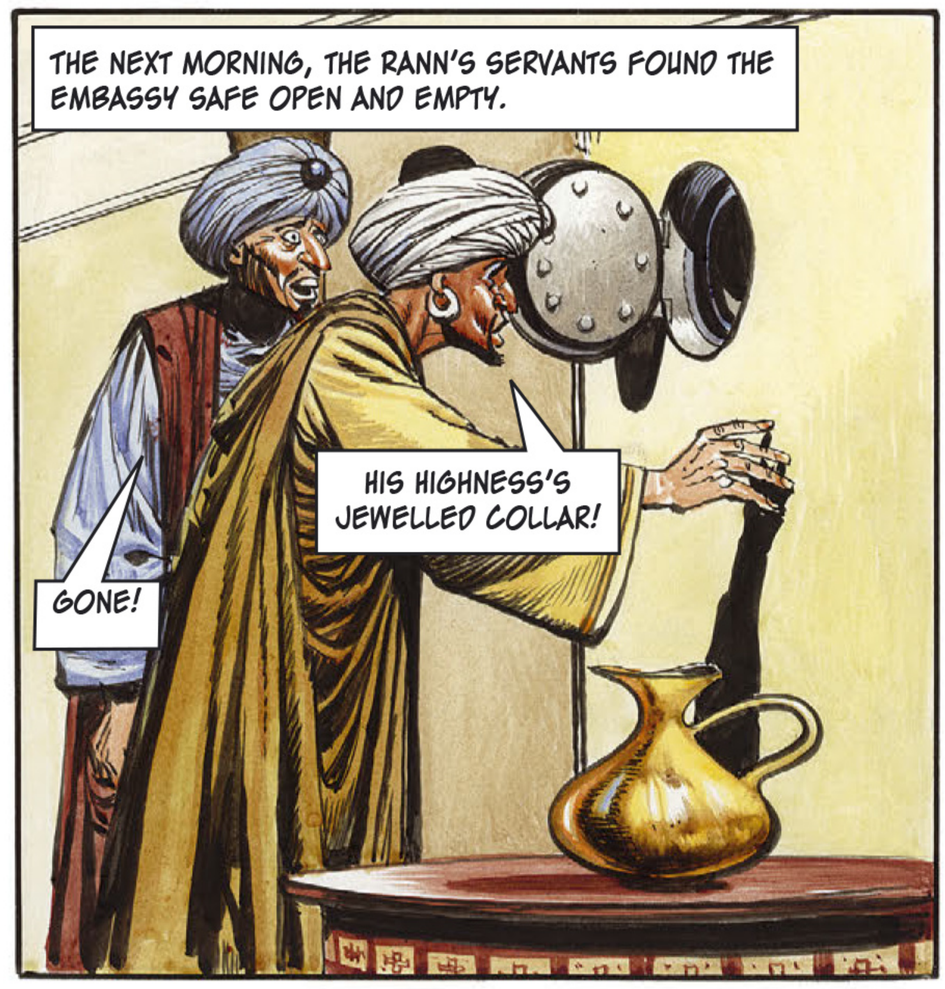
16th August 1975 – 11th October 1975

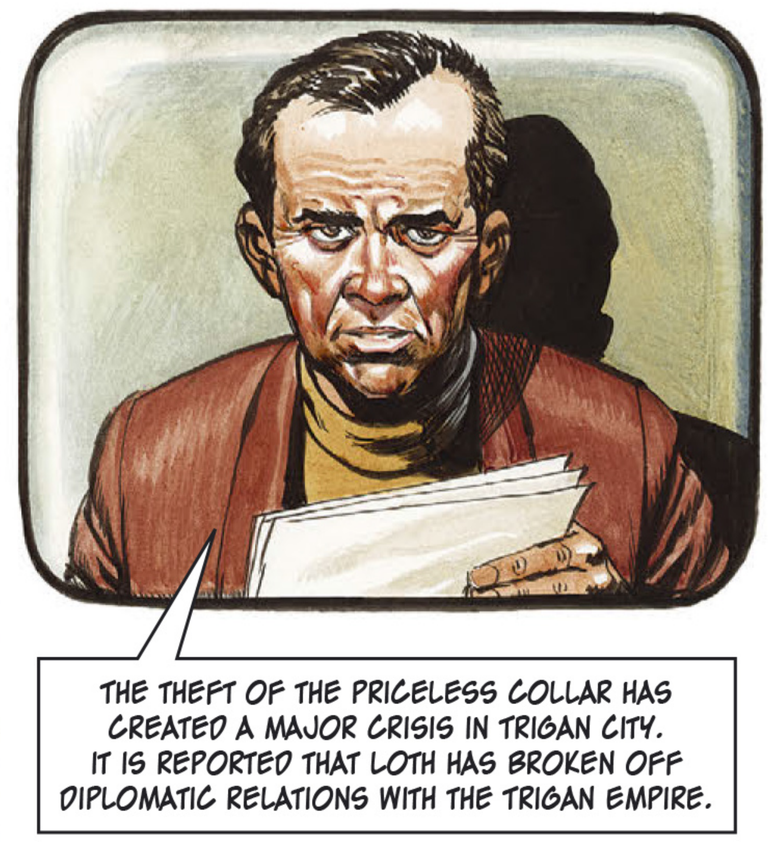
Story by Mike Butterworth

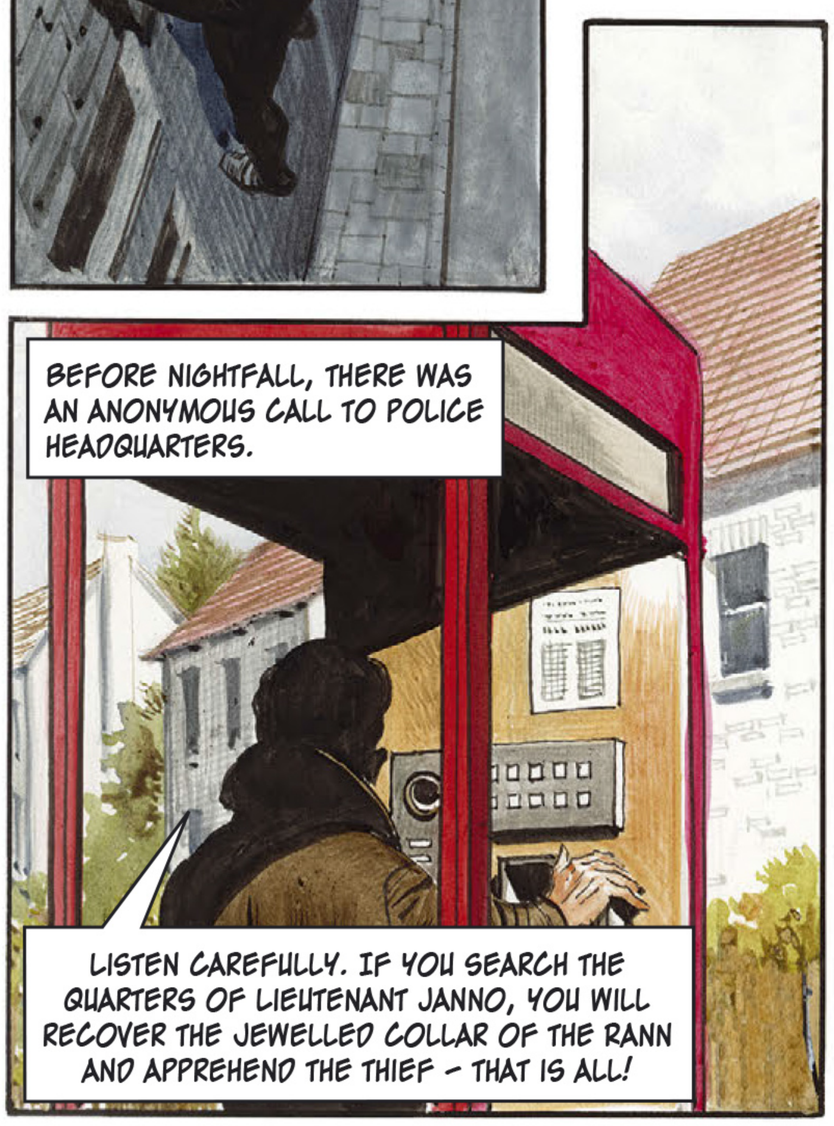
Art by Don Lawrence

FATE HAD INDEED SMILED UPON JANNO, ONE OF ELEKTON'S OUTSTANDING SPORTSMEN AND ATHLETES.
HE WAS A CRACK PILOT OF THE TRIGAN AIR FLEET.
... AND FAVOURITE NEPHEW OF THE EMPEROR.
YOUR HIGHNESS, MAY I PRESENT LIEUTENANT JANNO?
DON LAWRENCE
THE OCCASION WAS THE STATE VISIT TO TRIGAN CITY OF THE RANN OF LOTH, FAMED FOR HIS BOUNDLESS WEALTH AND HIS FABULOUS COLLECTION OF JEWELLERY.
KEREN, JUST LOOK AT THAT COLLAR HE'S WEARING. IT WOULD FEED A WHOLE PROVINCE FOR A YEAR OR BUY A BATTLESHIP!
AND THE STRANGE THING IS, JANNO, THAT HIS PEOPLE ARE STARVING AND THEY DON'T HAVE A BATTLESHIP EITHER.
THE RANN WAS STAYING AT THE LOTH EMBASSY. THAT NIGHT, A MASKED FIGURE HURLED A ROPE FROM THE ROOF OF THE NEXT BUILDING TO THAT OF THE EMBASSY AND BEGAN...
... A DEATH-DEFYING CROSSING!

FOLLOWED BY A NERVE-WRACKING DESCENT TO A LOWER WINDOW.

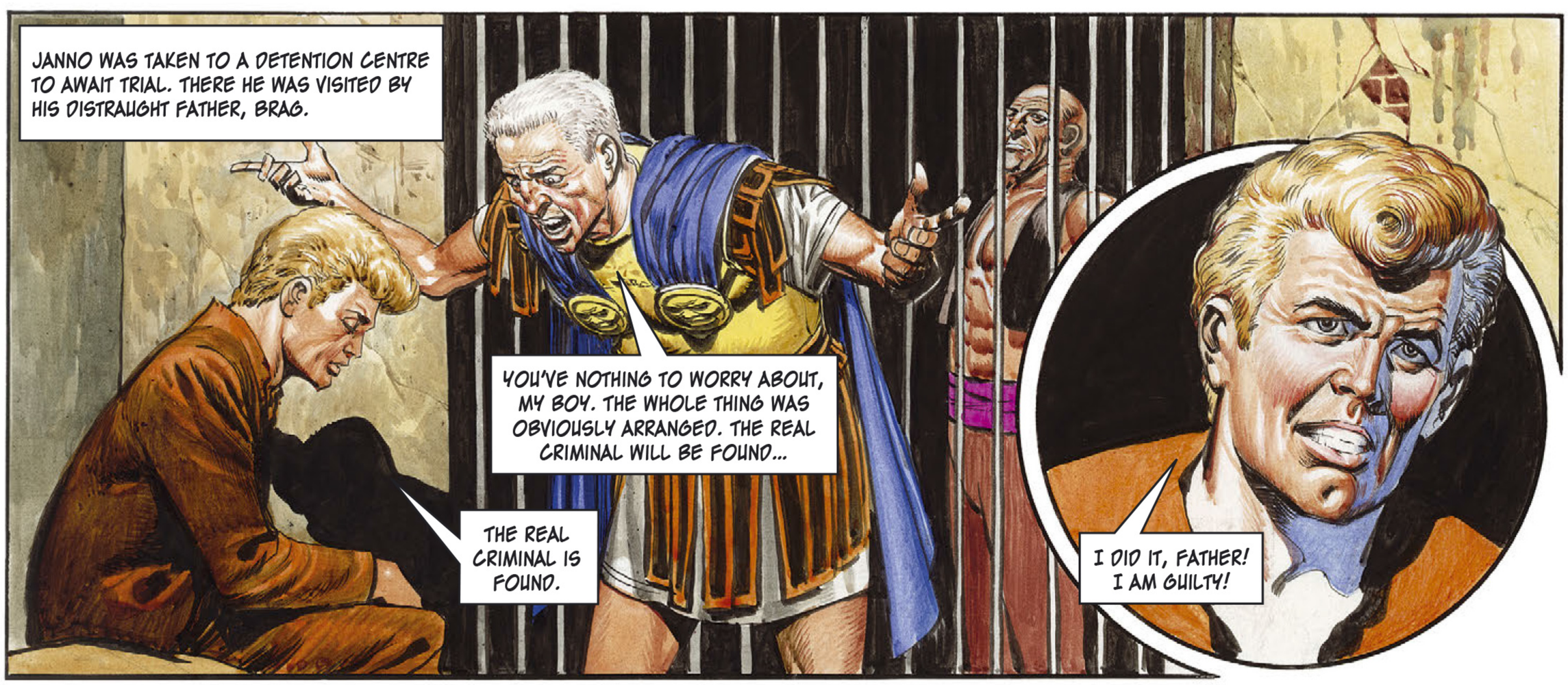

THE NEXT MORNING, THE RANN'S SERVANTS FOUND THE EMBASSY SAFE OPEN AND EMPTY.
HIS HIGHNESS'S JEWELLED COLLAR!
GONE!


THE THEFT OF THE PRICELESS COLLAR HAS CREATED A MAJOR CRISIS IN TRIGAN CITY. IT IS REPORTED THAT LOTH HAS BROKEN OFF DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH THE TRIGAN EMPIRE.


BEFORE NIGHTFALL, THERE WAS AN ANONYMOUS CALL TO POLICE HEADQUARTERS.
LISTEN CAREFULLY. IF YOU SEARCH THE QUARTERS OF LIEUTENANT JANNO, YOU WILL RECOVER THE JEWELLED COLLAR OF THE RANN AND APPREHEND THE THIEF – THAT IS ALL!

A KNOCK AT THE DOOR OF JANNO'S APARTMENT ANNOUNCED MEMBERS OF THE ANTI-CRIME SQUAD.
LIEUTENANT JANNO? WE'RE FROM THE POLICE. WE HAVE PERMISSION TO SEARCH YOUR QUARTERS.
DO COME IN, INSPECTOR.

A BRIEF SEARCH REVEALED...
BY ALL THE STARS!
YOU'RE UNDER ARREST!
AS YOU SAY.

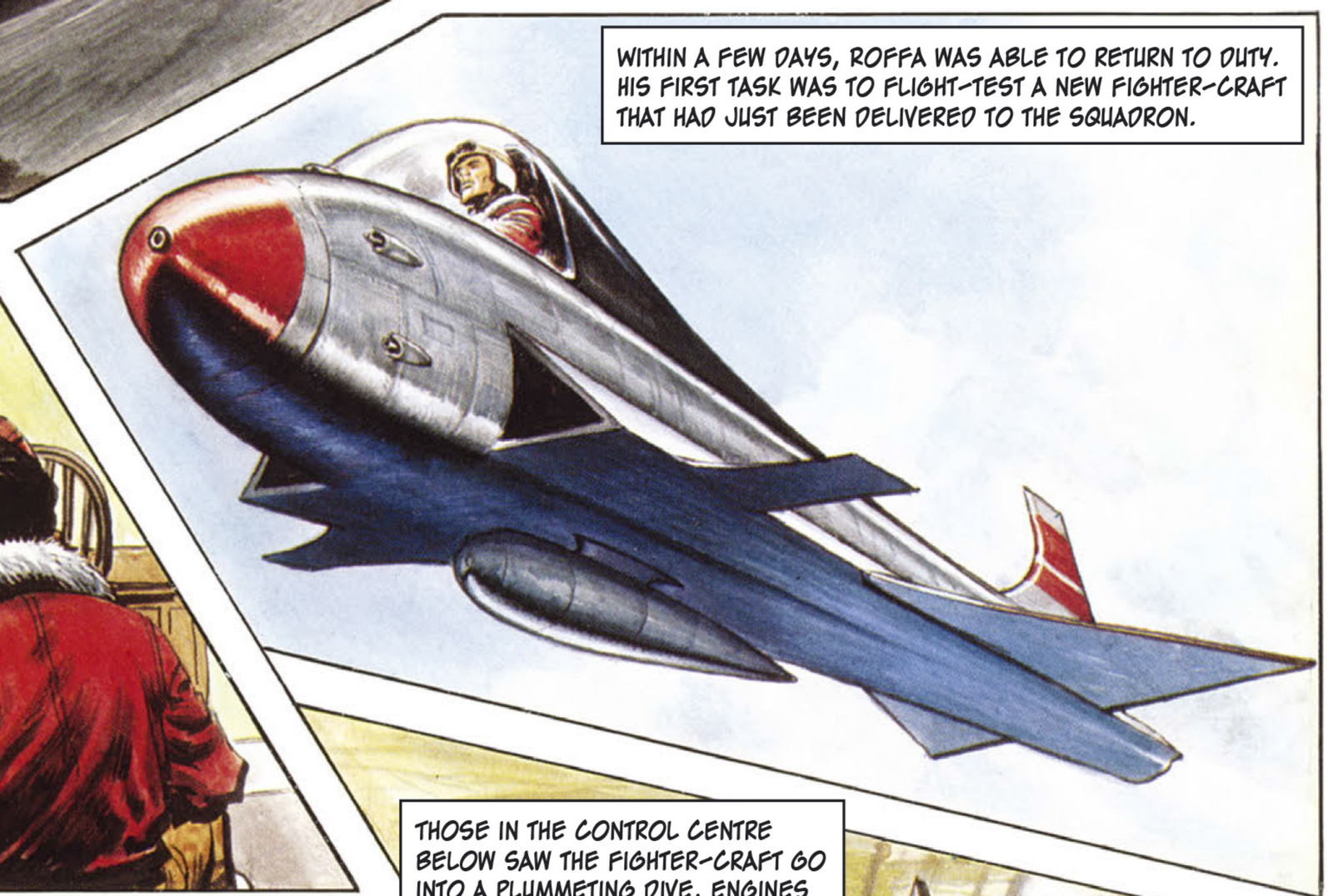

JANNO WAS TAKEN TO A DETENTION CENTRE TO AWAIT TRIAL. THERE HE WAS VISITED BY HIS DISTRAUGHT FATHER, BRAG.
YOU'VE NOTHING TO WORRY ABOUT, MY BOY. THE WHOLE THING WAS OBVIOUSLY ARRANGED. THE REAL CRIMINAL WILL BE FOUND...
THE REAL CRIMINAL IS FOUND.
I DID IT, FATHER! I AM GUILTY!

JANNO WAS TRIED BEFORE THE HIGH COURT OF THE EMPIRE.
THE FACTS ARE PLAIN. DOES THE DEFENDANT OFFER ANY EVIDENCE ON HIS OWN BEHALF?
NO, EXCELLENCY. HE PLEADS GUILTY AND ASKS FOR NO MERCY.
NO MERCY WILL BE GRANTED! THIS WAS DELIBERATE THEFT OF THE VALUABLE PROPERTY OF THE RULER OF A FRIENDLY STATE. NOR WILL THE GUILTY PERSON'S MEMBERSHIP OF THE IMPERIAL FAMILY COUNT IN THIS COURT...
JANNO! I SENTENCE YOU TO TEN LUNAR YEARS ON THE ISLE OF DESPAIR!
THE ISLE OF DESPAIR! GRIM PRISON FORTRESS OF THE TRIGAN EMPIRE. THE PLACE WHERE THE MOST DANGEROUS AND HARDENED CRIMINALS WERE SENT TO SUFFER THEIR BITTER YEARS OF PUNISHMENT.
THE CONDEMNED AIR FLEET PILOT WAS TAKEN DIRECT FROM THE ROOF OF THE COURTHOUSE BY POLICE HELI-JET. A GREAT CROWD WATCHED THE DEPARTURE - INCLUDING JANNO'S COMRADE-IN-ARMS, ROFFA.
FAREWELL, JANNO! FEW SURVIVE TEN YEARS ON THE ISLE OF DESPAIR! IF YOU EVER COME BACK, YOU'LL ONLY BE A WRECK OF YOUR FORMER SELF!
ROFFA WAS HIMSELF WATCHED...
SUBJECT HAS LEFT THE VICINITY OF THE COURTHOUSE AND IS WALKING TOWARDS THE GREAT SQUARE. THE SITUATION IS PERFECT...
I'D HAVE STAKED MY LIFE THAT JANNO WOULD NEVER HAVE DONE SUCH A THING...
ROFFA WALKED IN A DAZE, HIS MIND TURNING OVER THE BAFFLING FACTS OF HIS FRIEND'S ARREST AND IMPRISONMENT...

AND THEN... IT HAPPENED!
AAAAAAAGHHH!

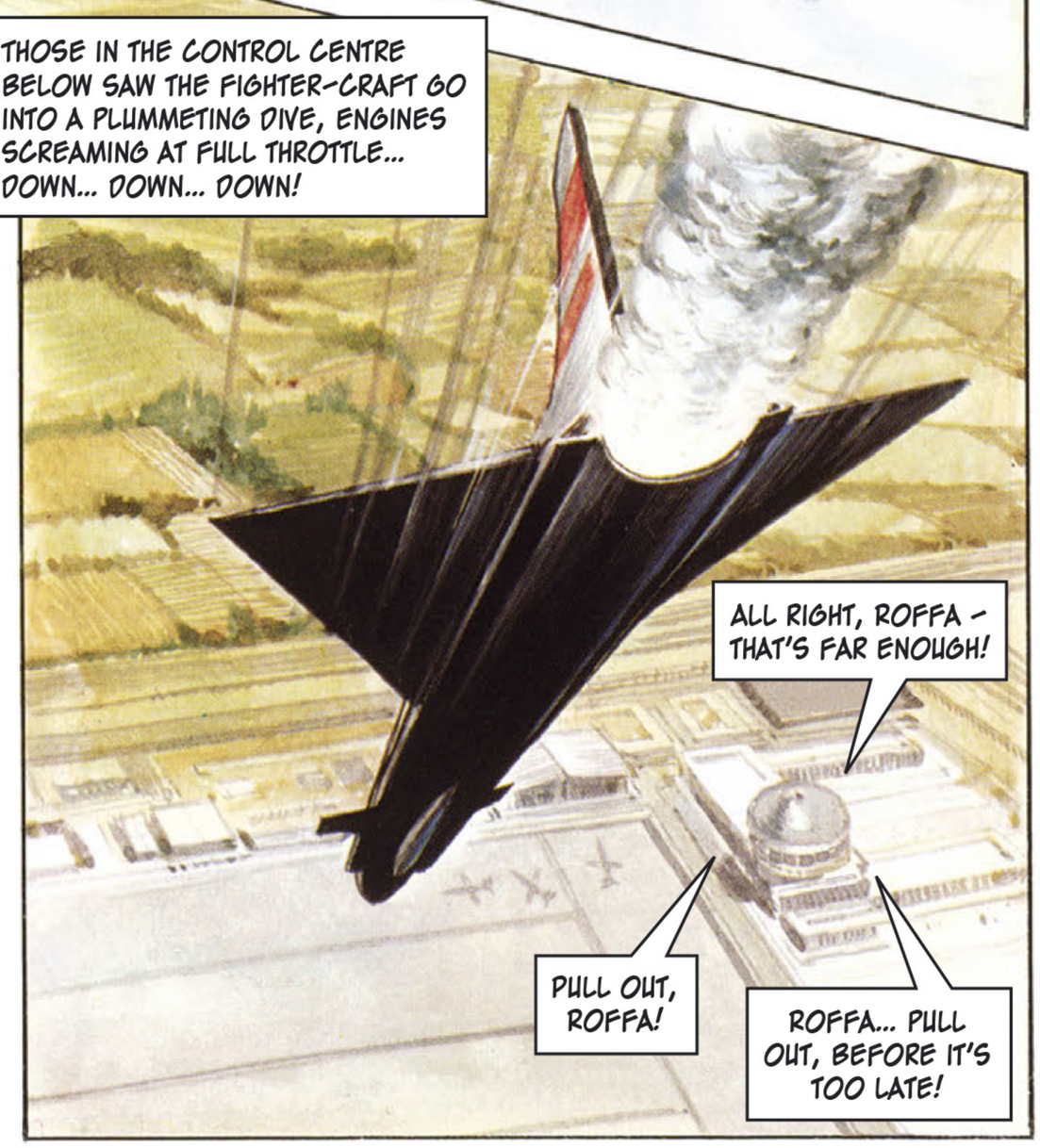
HELP WAS SWIFTLY ON THE SCENE.
WE'LL GIVE HIM A BLOOD TRANSFUSION ON THE WAY BACK TO THE HOSPITAL.

THAT EVENING, ROFFA WAS WELL ENOUGH TO RECEIVE VISITORS – KEREN AND ANOTHER PILOT FROM HIS SQUADRON.
AND YOU SAY THIS FELLOW NEVER STOPPED?
THAT'S RIGHT, KEREN. IN FACT, FROM WHAT ALL THE ONLOOKERS SAID, IT LOOKED LIKE A DELIBERATE ATTEMPT TO DISPOSE OF ME!

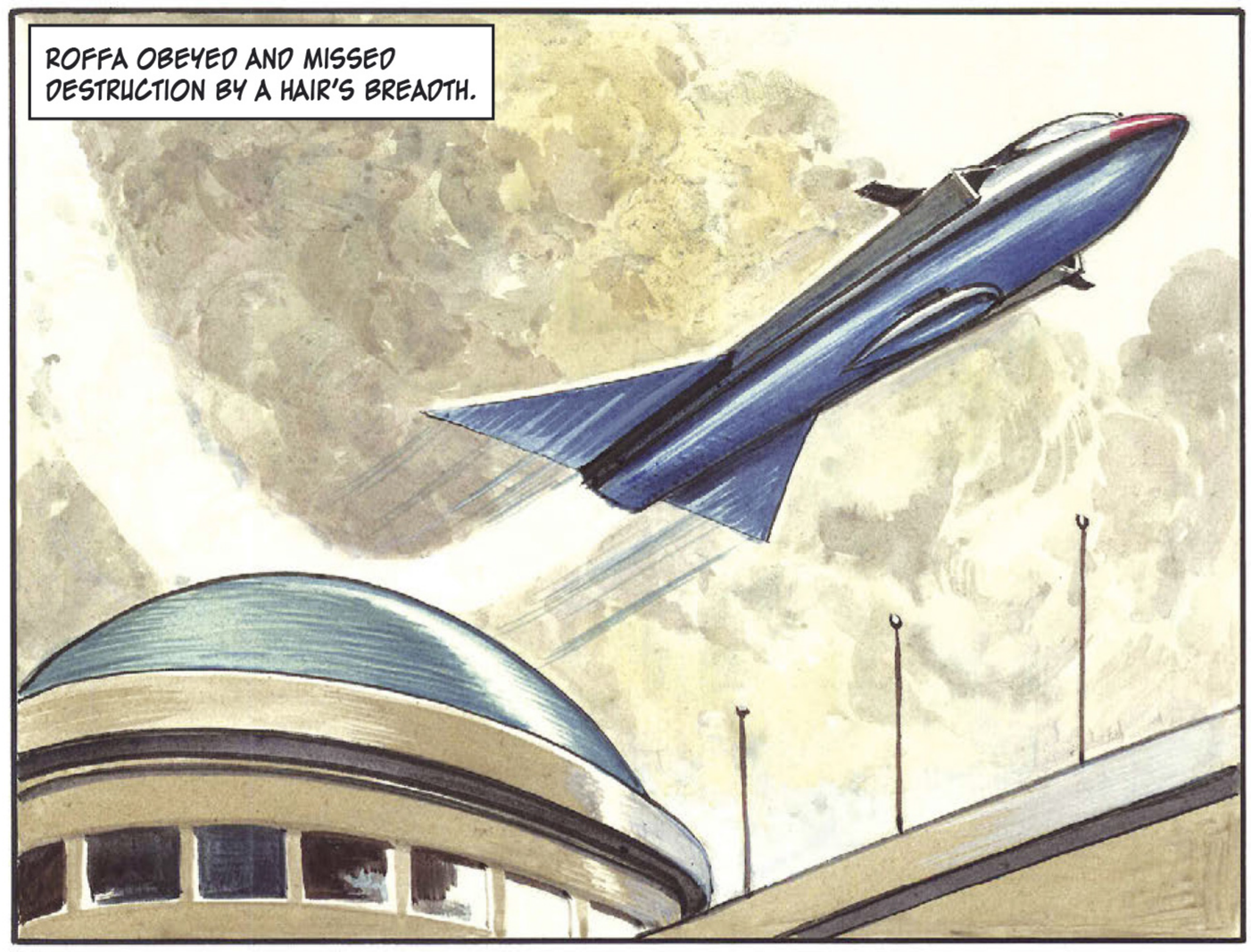

WITHIN A FEW DAYS, ROFFA WAS ABLE TO RETURN TO DUTY. HIS FIRST TASK WAS TO FLIGHT-TEST A NEW FIGHTER-CRAFT THAT HAD JUST BEEN DELIVERED TO THE SQUADRON.

AND THEN – SUDDENLY AND WITHOUT WARNING – A VOICE SPOKE TO HIM!
ROFFA! YOU WILL DO AS I SAY! UNDERSTOOD?
YE– YES! OF COURSE!

YOU WILL DIVE THIS CRAFT STRAIGHT INTO THE GROUND – AT MAXIMUM SPEED! UNDERSTOOD?
INTO THE GROUND... MAXIMUM SPEED... UNDERSTOOD!

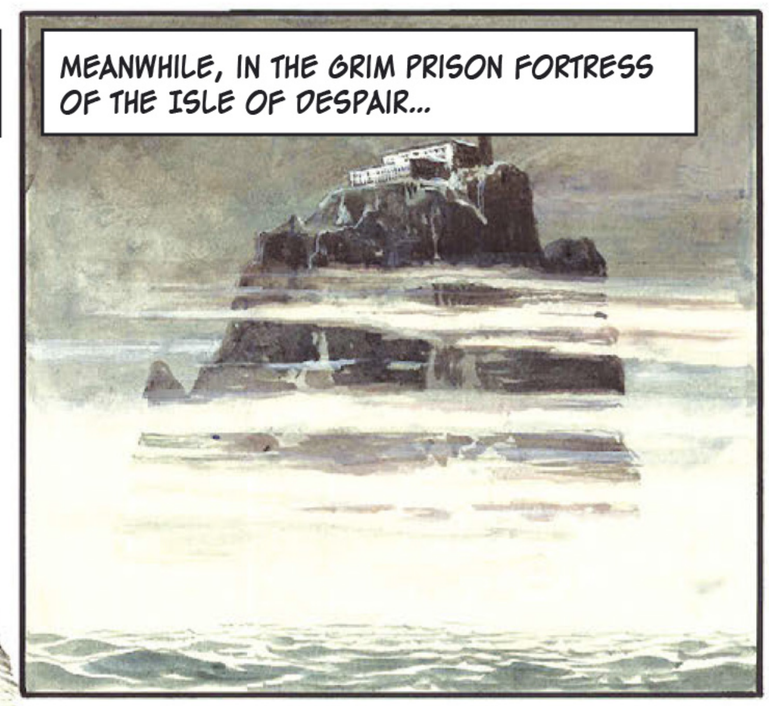

THOSE IN THE CONTROL CENTRE BELOW SAW THE FIGHTER-CRAFT GO INTO A PLUMMETING DIVE, ENGINES SCREAMING AT FULL THROTTLE... DOWN... DOWN... DOWN!
ALL RIGHT, ROFFA – THAT'S FAR ENOUGH!
PULL OUT, ROFFA!
ROFFA... PULL OUT, BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE!

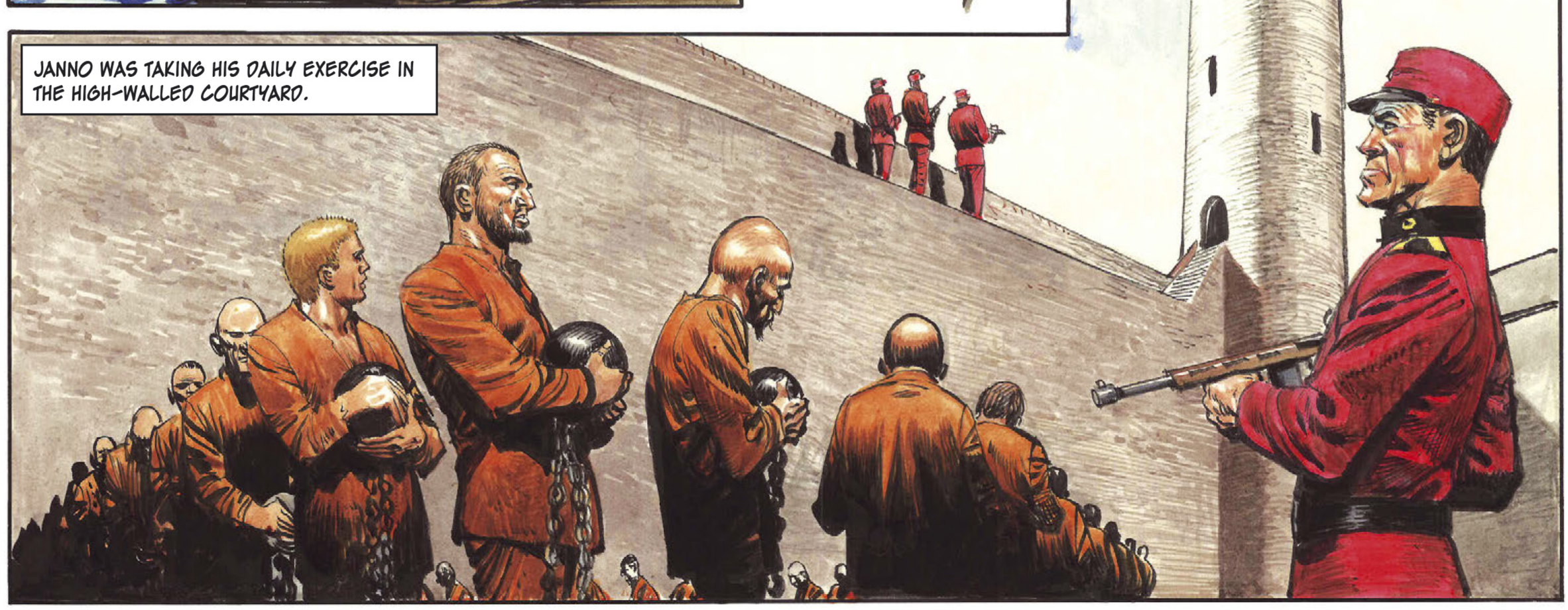
JUST BEFORE ROFFA'S FIGHTER-CRAFT COULD SMASH ITSELF INTO A FIREBALL, THE STRANGE VOICE SOUNDED AGAIN WITHIN HIS EAR.
WELL DONE, ROFFA! YOU HAVE LEARNED OBEDIENCE. NOW, PULL OUT OF THE DIVE!


ROFFA OBEYED AND MISSED DESTRUCTION BY A HAIR'S BREADTH.

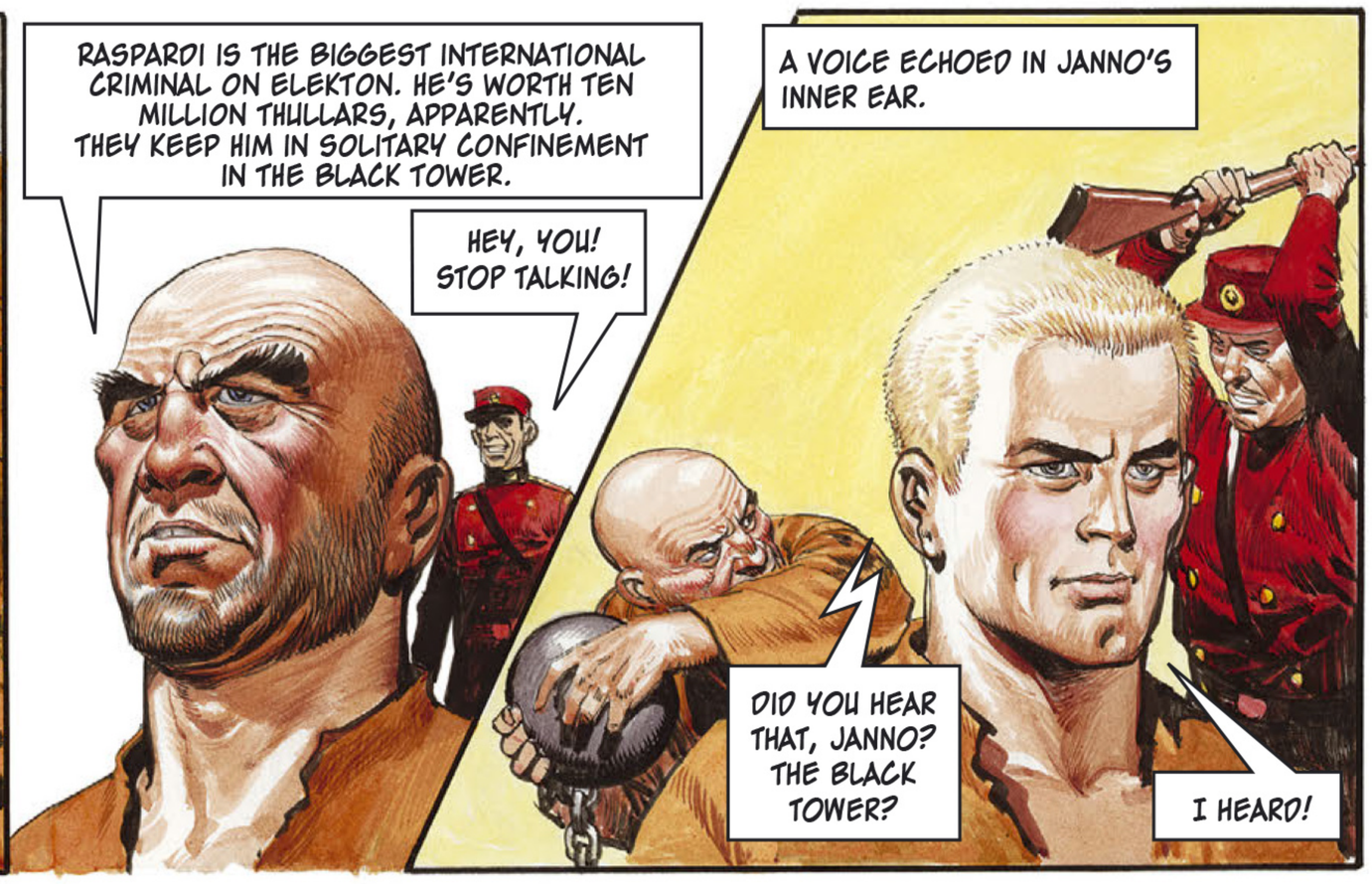
THE YOUNG PILOT WAS SEVERELY DISCIPLINED BY HIS SQUADRON COMANDER.
YOU ARE EXTREMELY LUCKY NOT TO BE COURT MARTIALLED FOR DANGEROUS FLYING. AS IT IS, YOU WILL BE GROUNDED FOR A LUNAR MONTH AND SUFFER A LOSS OF PAY FOR THAT PERIOD.

AGAIN, THE VOICE IN ROFFA'S INNER EAR...
A MONTH WITH NO DUTIES, ROFFA. JUST THE OPPORTUNITY YOU NEED.


MEANWHILE, IN THE GRIM PRISON FORTRESS OF THE ISLE OF DESPAIR...


JANNO WAS TAKING HIS DAILY EXERCISE IN THE HIGH-WALLED COURTYARD.

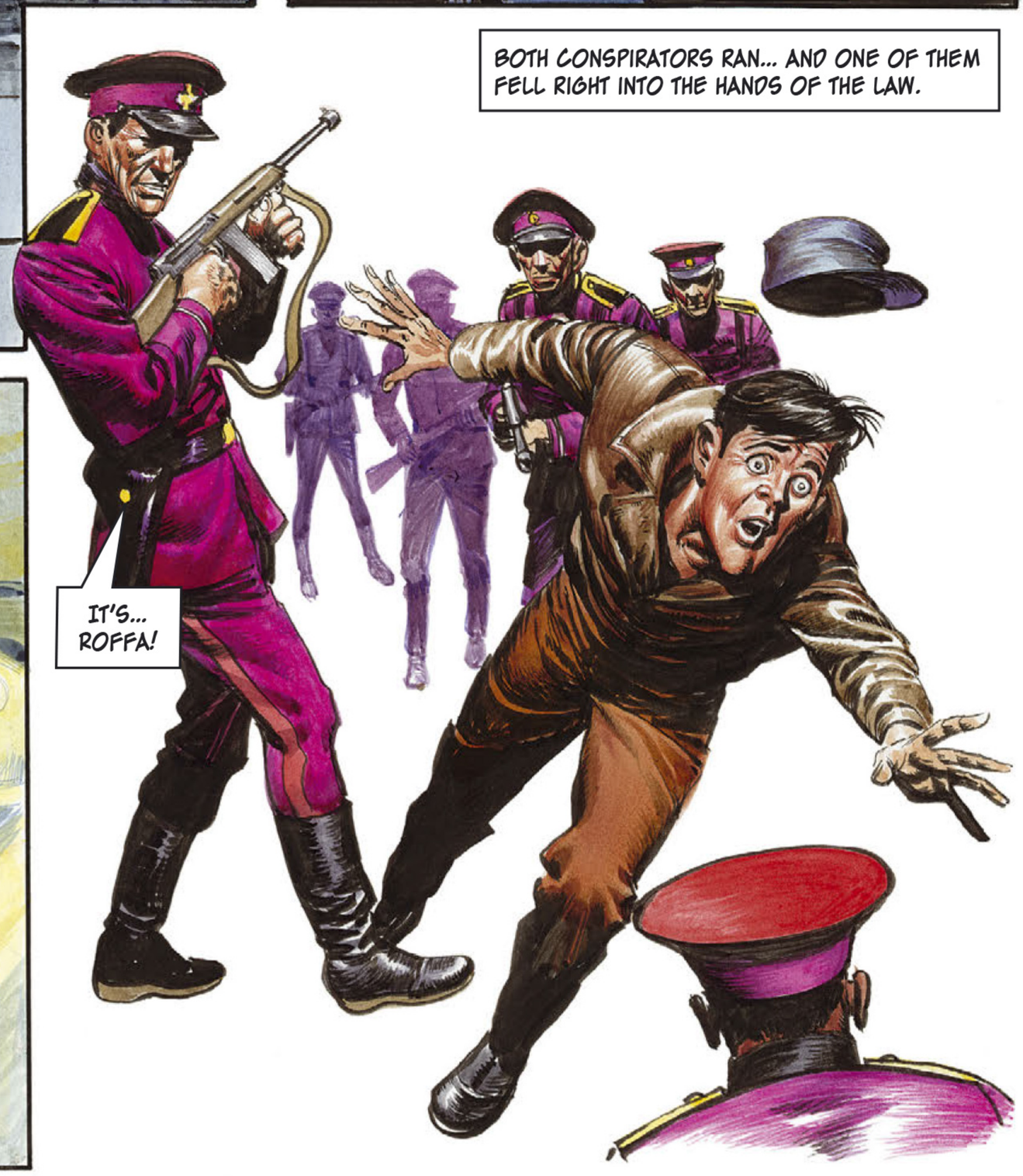
WHERE ARE THOSE GUARDS TAKING THAT TRAY OF FOOD?
TO RASPARDI - WHO ELSE?


RASPARDI IS THE BIGGEST INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL ON ELEKTON. HE'S WORTH TEN MILLION THULLARS, APPARENTLY. THEY KEEP HIM IN SOLITARY CONFINEMENT IN THE BLACK TOWER.
HEY, YOU! STOP TALKING!
A VOICE ECHOED IN JANNO'S INNER EAR.
DID YOU HEAR THAT, JANNO? THE BLACK TOWER?
I HEARD!

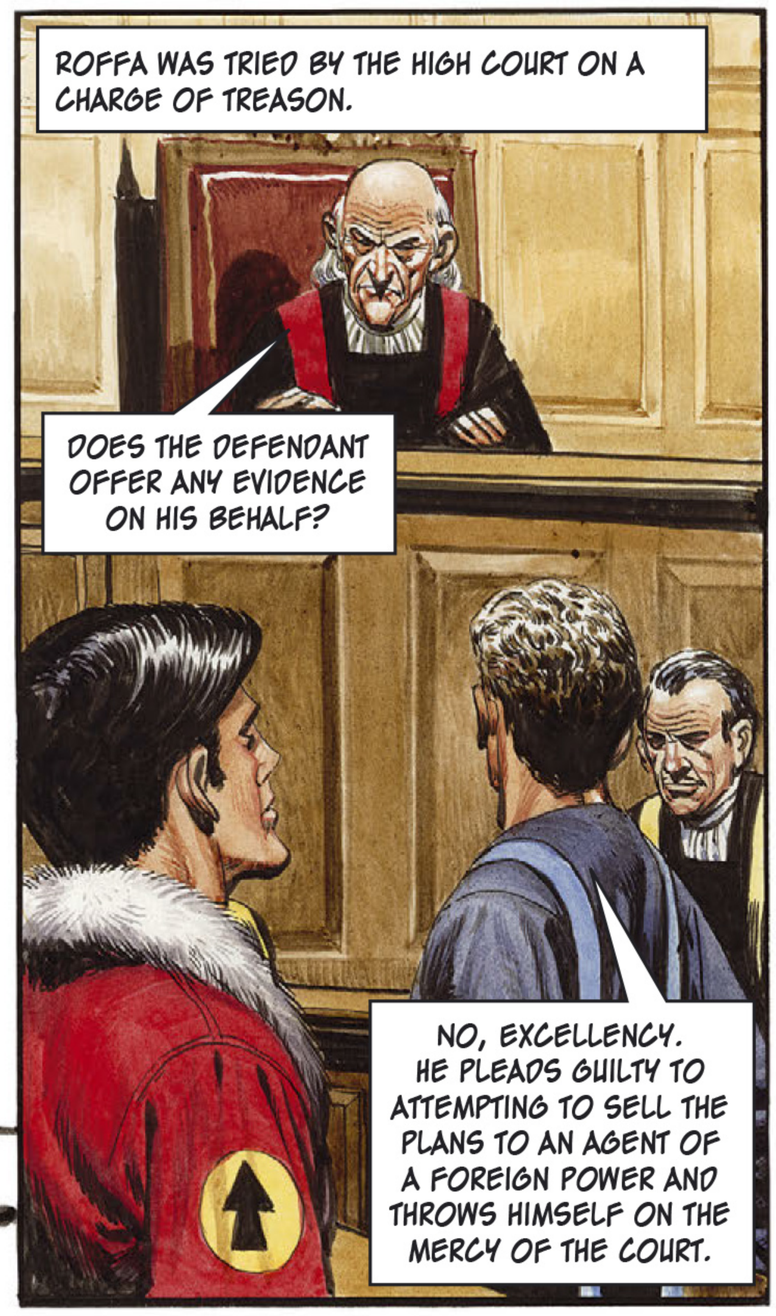
THAT SAME NIGHT, TWO FIGURES MET IN THE GREAT SQUARE OF TRIGAN CITY UNDER THE STATUE OF THE EMPEROR TRIGO.
IF YOU ARE HE WHO ARRANGED TO MEET ME HERE, GIVE THE PASSWORD.
THE PASSWORD IS... 'TREACHERY'!

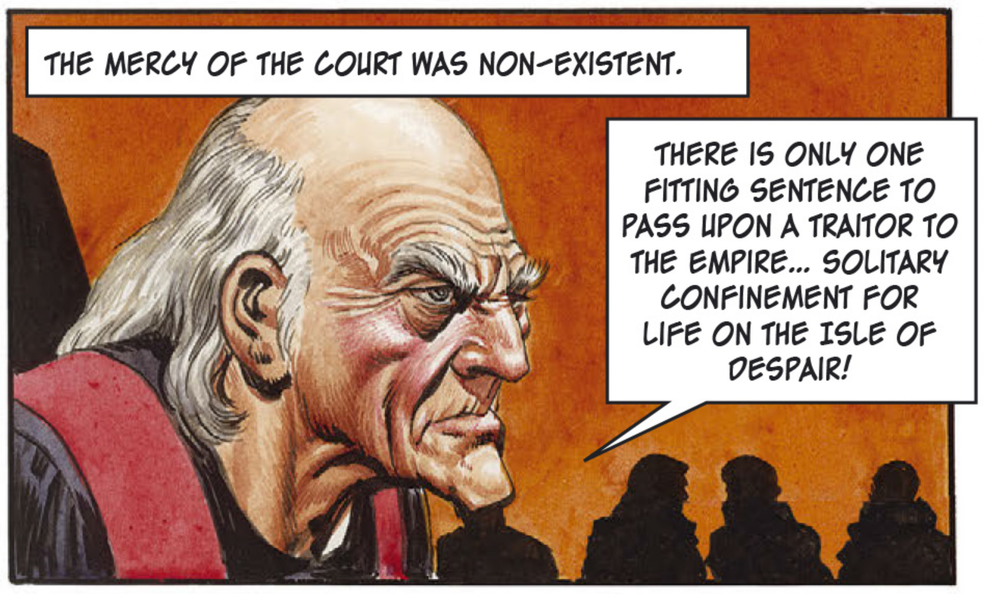
YOU HAVE THE PLANS OF TRIGAN'S NEW BOMBING CRAFT?
I HAVE IT HERE. FIRST YOU WILL HAND OVER THE AGREED SUM OF MONEY.

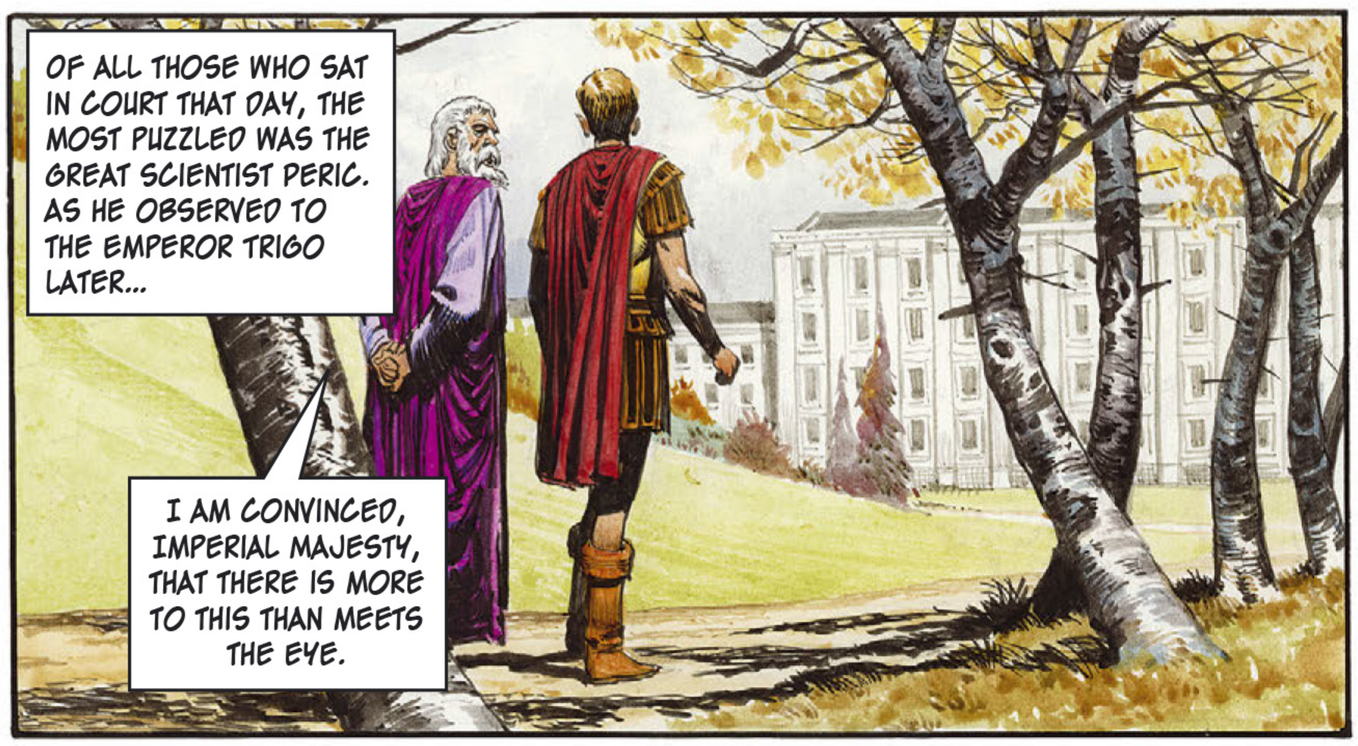
THE NEXT MOMENT, THE PLOTTERS WERE BATHED IN GLARING LIGHT.
AAAAAAH! IT'S A TRAP!

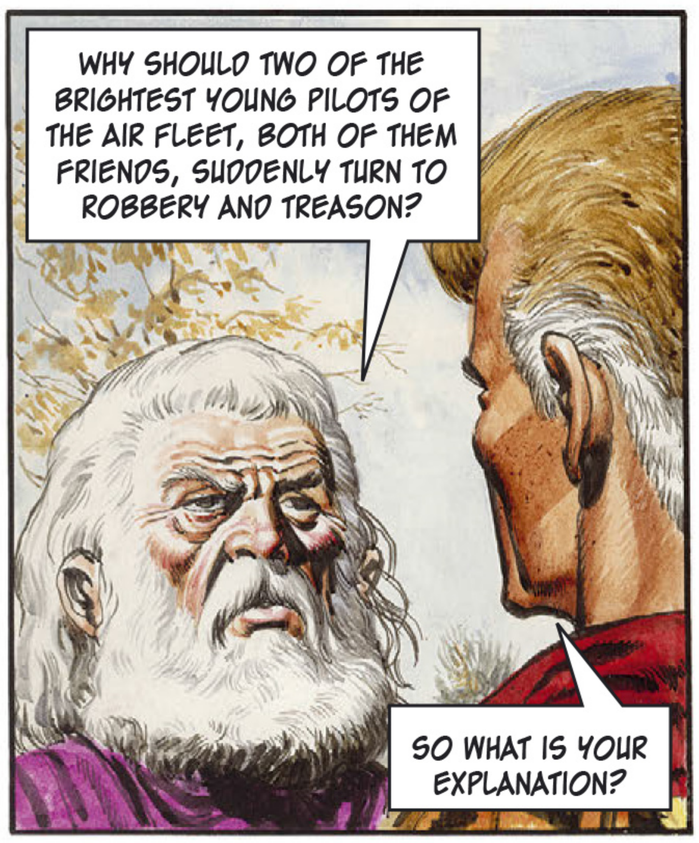

BOTH CONSPIRATORS RAN... AND ONE OF THEM FELL RIGHT INTO THE HANDS OF THE LAW.
IT'S... ROFFA!

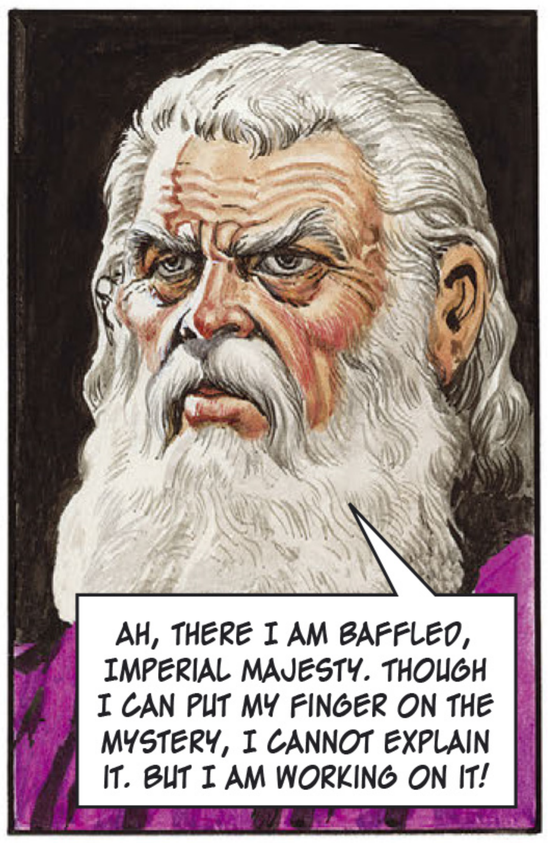
OUR INFORMATION WAS CORRECT. THIS FELLOW'S A MILITARY ATACHE AT THE CATON EMBASSY... AND THIS IS ROFFA, ONE OF THE AIR FLEET.
ONE OF THE CONSPIRATORS FOUGHT LIKE A WILD ANIMAL TO EVADE CAPTURE BY THE TRIGAN POLICE, BUT HIS COMPANION SURRENDERED MEEKLY.

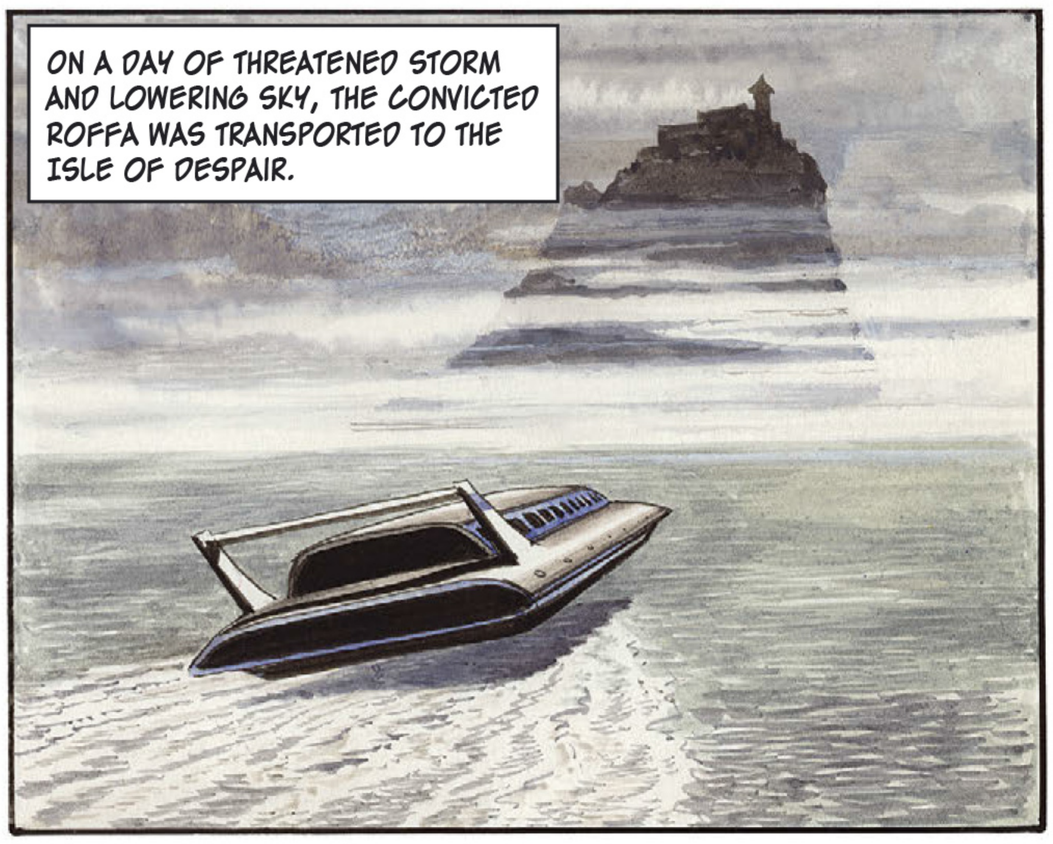

ROFFA WAS TRIED BY THE HIGH COURT ON A CHARGE OF TREASON.
DOES THE DEFENDANT OFFER ANY EVIDENCE ON HIS BEHALF?
NO, EXCELLENCY. HE PLEADS GUILTY TO ATTEMPTING TO SELL THE PLANS TO AN AGENT OF A FOREIGN POWER AND THROWS HIMSELF ON THE MERCY OF THE COURT.


THE MERCY OF THE COURT WAS NON-EXISTENT.
THERE IS ONLY ONE FITTING SENTENCE TO PASS UPON A TRAITOR TO THE EMPIRE... SOLITARY CONFINEMENT FOR LIFE ON THE ISLE OF DESPAIR!


OF ALL THOSE WHO SAT IN COURT THAT DAY, THE MOST PUZZLED WAS THE GREAT SCIENTIST PERIC. AS HE OBSERVED TO THE EMPEROR TRIGO LATER...
I AM CONVINCED, IMPERIAL MAJESTY, THAT THERE IS MORE TO THIS THAN MEETS THE EYE.


WHY SHOULD TWO OF THE BRIGHTEST YOUNG PILOTS OF THE AIR FLEET, BOTH OF THEM FRIENDS, SUDDENLY TURN TO ROBBERY AND TREASON?
SO WHAT IS YOUR EXPLANATION?


AH, THERE I AM BAFFLED, IMPERIAL MAJESTY. THOUGH I CAN PUT MY FINGER ON THE MYSTERY, I CANNOT EXPLAIN IT. BUT I AM WORKING ON IT!

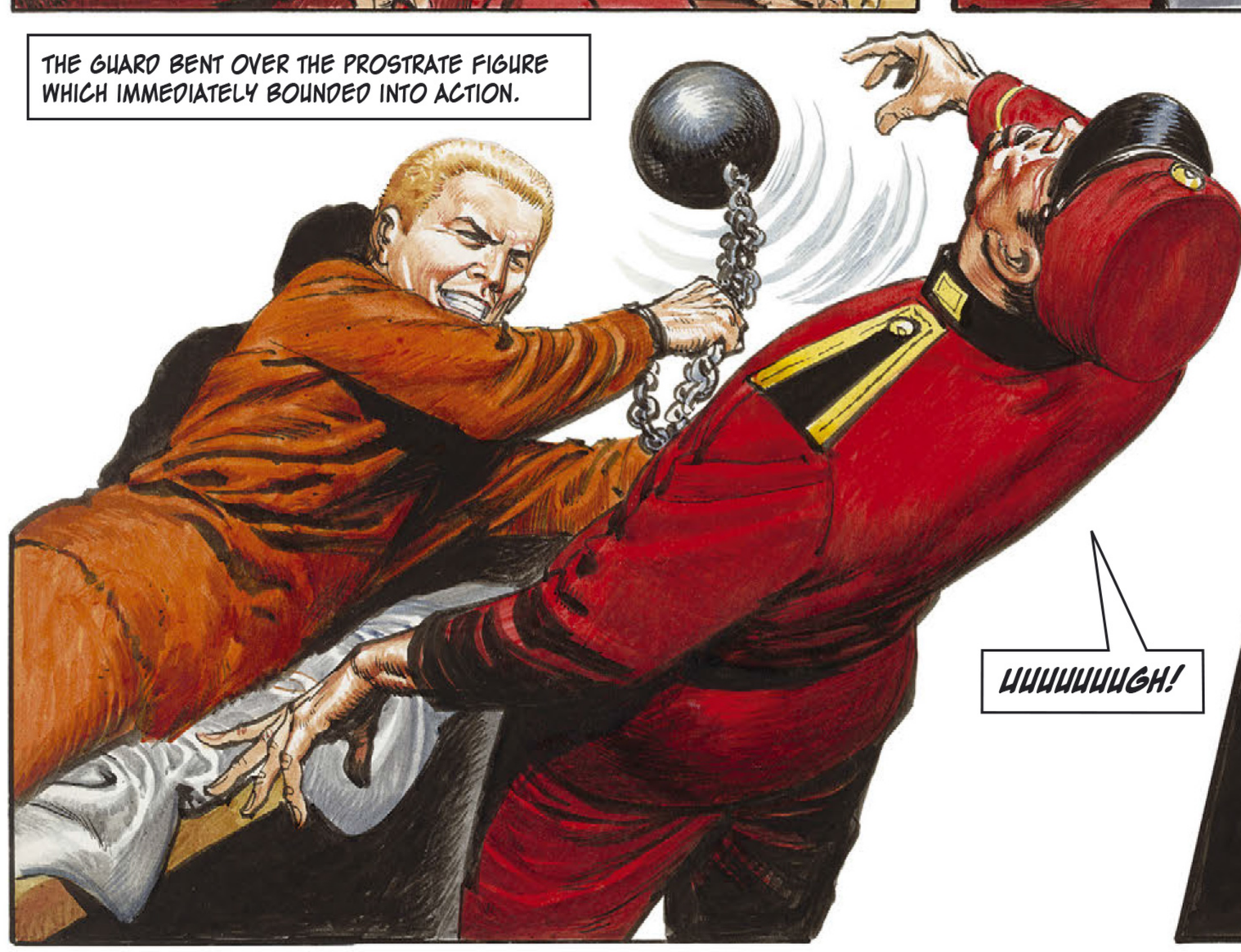

ON A DAY OF THREATENED STORM AND LOWERING SKY, THE CONVICTED ROFFA WAS TRANSPORTED TO THE ISLE OF DESPAIR.

HIGH ABOVE, A LONE CRAFT FOLLOWED THE PROGRESS OF ROFFA'S GRIM JOURNEY.
ROFFA? DO YOU HEAR ME, ROFFA?

WHEN YOU REACH THE ISLE, YOU WILL IMMEDIATELY BE PUT INTO SOLITARY CONFIREMENT. BUT YOU WILL NOT BE ALONE FOR LONG.

THE VOICE WAS HEARD ONLY BY ROFFA.
... YOU WILL SOON BE JOINED BY JANNO. DO YOU UNDERSTAND?
YES, I UNDERSTAND.
THE FOOL'S TALKING TO HIMSELF ALREADY!

AT THAT MOMENT, WITHIN THE GRIM FORTRESS PRISON, A HARSH-FACED GUARD HAD JUST ENTERED JANNO'S CELL.
HERE'S YOUR SUPPER, ANIMAL! HEY! ARE YOU ILL, OR...


THE GUARD BENT OVER THE PROSTRATE FIGURE WHICH IMMEDIATELY BOUNDED INTO ACTION.
UUUUUUUGH!

SHORTLY AFTER, JANNO LEFT HIS CELL DISGUISED. THE SAME MYSTERIOUS VOICE HE HAD HEARD BEFORE SPOKE IN HIS INNER EAR.
WELL DONE, JANO. NOW YOU WILL PROCEED WITH THE SECOND PART OF THE MASTER PLAN.

THE HOWLING OF A SIREN AND THE CRIES OF THE GUARDS ECHOED OVER THE GRIM BATTLEMENTS OF THE ISLE OF DESPAIR.
ALARM, ALARM! PRISONER ESCAPED!

JANNO'S VICTIM WAS CARRIED STILL HALF-SENSELESS FROM THE CELL WHERE HE HAD BEEN LOCKED BY THE MISSING PRISONER.
HOW DID YOU ALLOW THE ANIMAL TO OVERPOWER YOU AND TAKE YOUR UNIFORM AND WEAPON?
HE TRICKED ME BY SEEMING TO BE ILL, SIR. THEN HE ATTACKED ME.

BY THE TIME ROFFA WAS BEING LANDED FROM THE TRANSPORT, THE HUE AND CRY HAD REACHED THE SHORE OF THE ISLE.
WHAT HAPPENED? WHAT'S THE PANIC?
PRISONER ESCAPED. IT'S JANNO AND HE'S ARMED!

HERE'S THE HEADPIECE THAT JANNO WAS WEARING. HE MUST HAVE SET OFF TO SWIM TO THE MAINLAND!

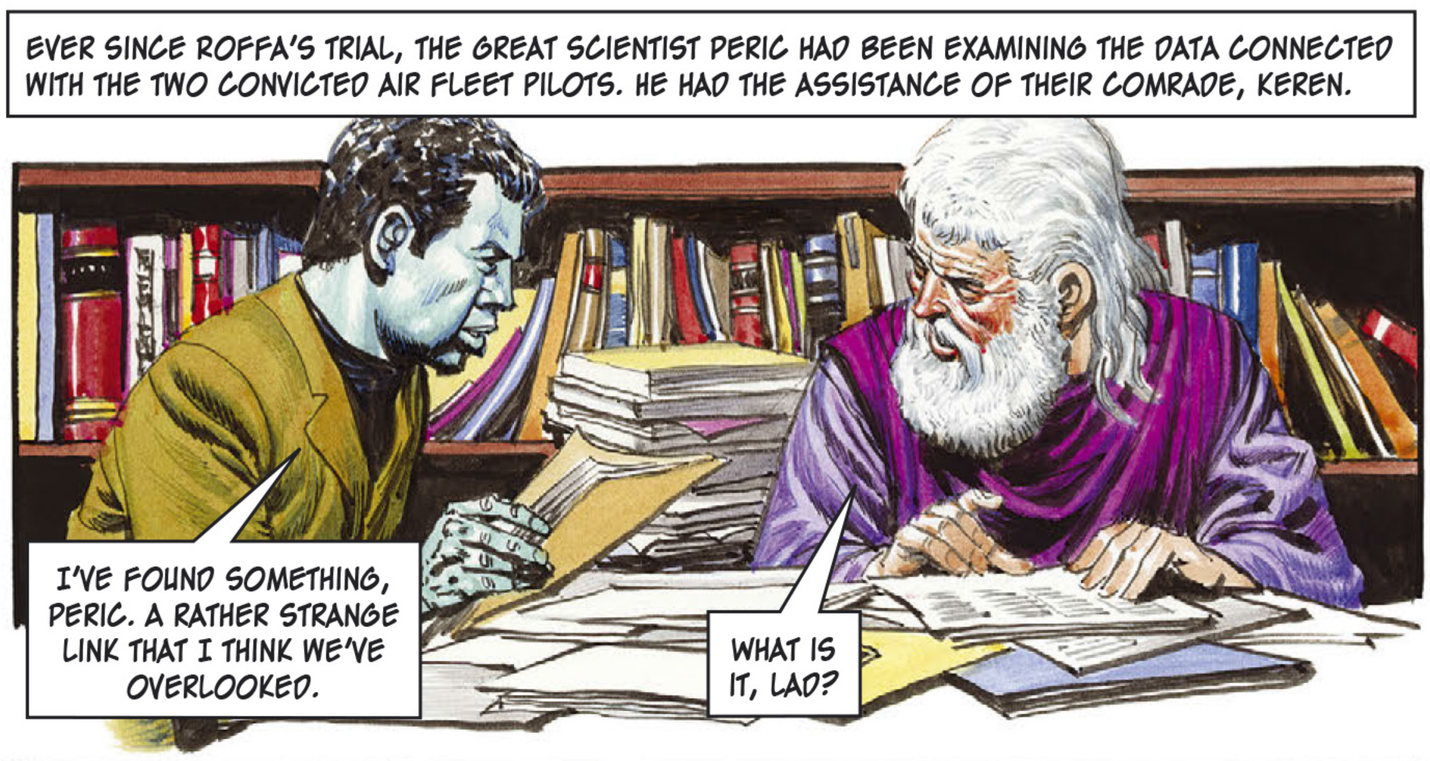
THEN HE'S DONE FOR — FINISHED!
LOOK OUT THERE!

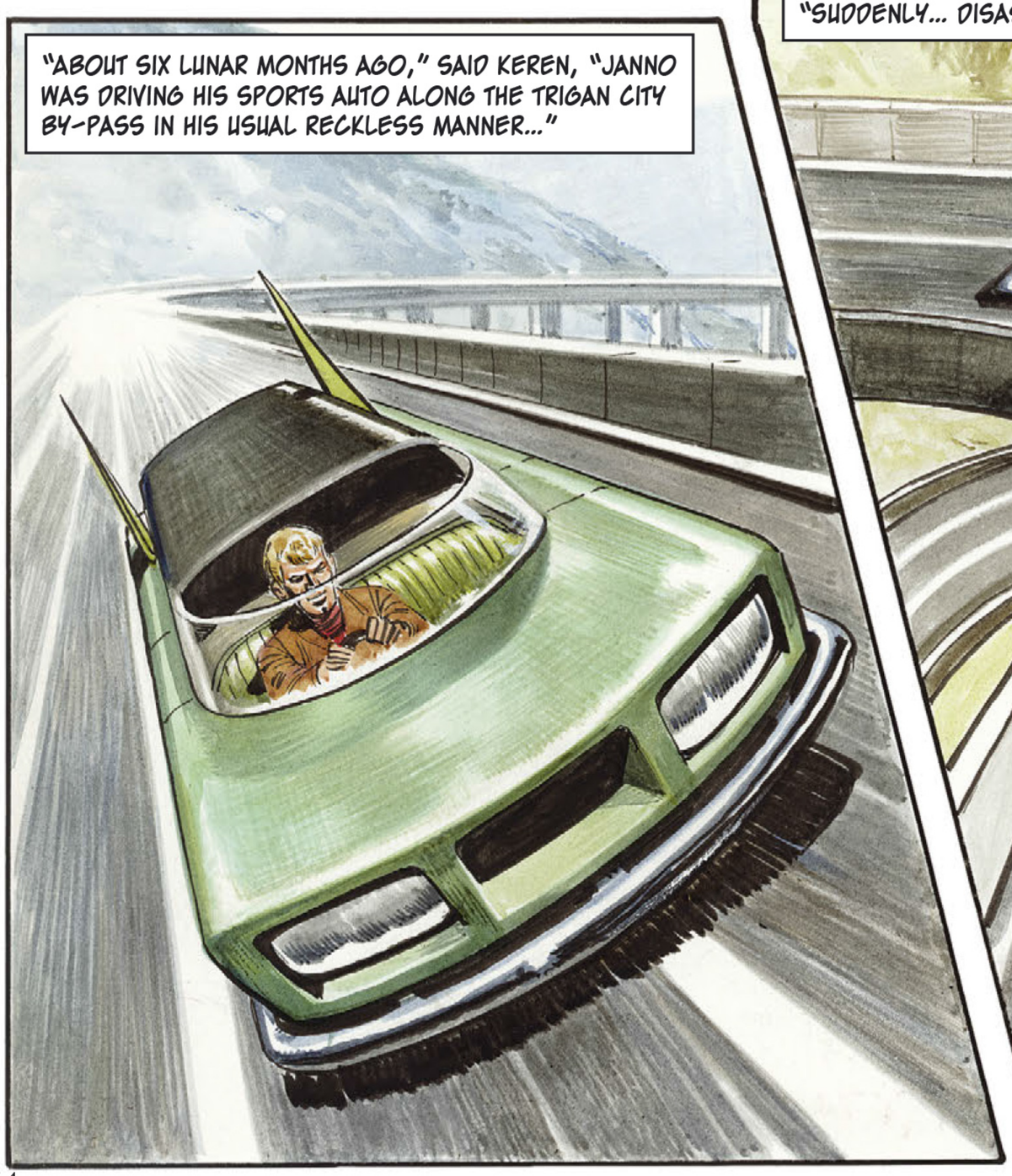
NO ONE SWIMS TO THE MAINLAND. OUR FRIENDS OUT THERE SEE TO THAT.

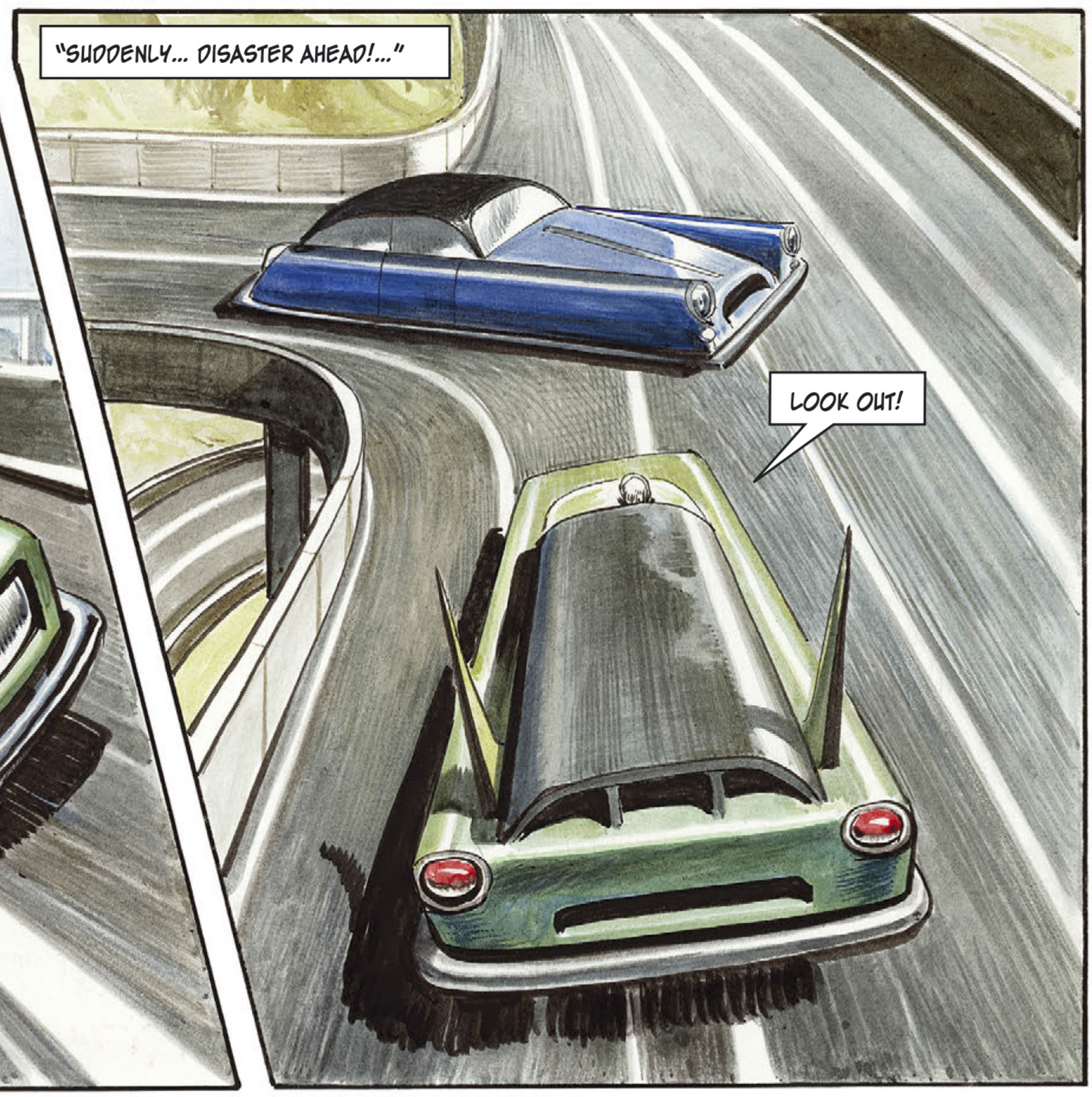
ROFFA WAS THROWN INTO A CELL. MOMENTS AFTER THE DOOR HAD BEEN BOLTED, A FAMILIAR VOICE MADE ROFFA TURN.
HELLO, ROFFA. NICE TO SEE YOU.
JANNO!

STILL CLAD IN THE GUARD'S UNIFORM AND CARRYING WEAPONS WAS THE ESCAPED PRISONER.
THEY ALL THINK THAT YOU PERISHED TRYING TO SWIM FOR THE MAINLAND.
THAT'S WHAT I WANTED THEM TO THINK! BUT I'M FINE. WE'RE BOTH FREE! FREE TO MOVE AROUND THE PRISON AT WILL.

FREE, WITH THE AID OF THESE KEYS, TO OBEY THE VOICE THAT SPEAKS IN OUR INNER EAR.

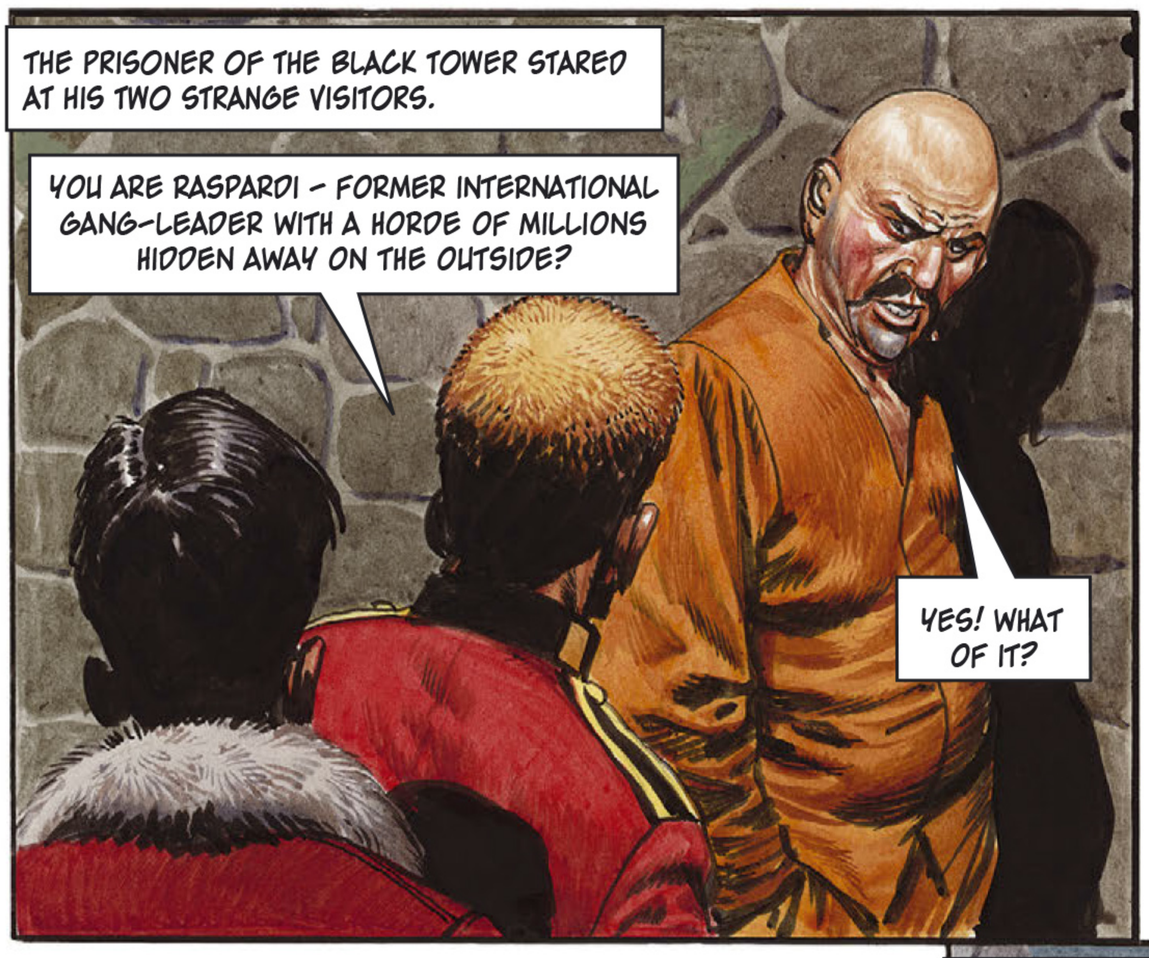

EVER SINCE ROFFA'S TRIAL, THE GREAT SCIENTIST PERIC HAD BEEN EXAMINING THE DATA CONNECTED WITH THE TWO CONVICTED AIR FLEET PILOTS. HE HAD THE ASSISTANCE OF THEIR COMRADE, KEREN.
I'VE FOUND SOMETHING, PERIC. A RATHER STRANGE LINK THAT I THINK WE'VE OVERLOOKED.
WHAT IS IT, LAD?


"ABOUT SIX LUNAR MONTHS AGO," SAID KEREN, "JANNO WAS DRIVING HIS SPORTS AUTO ALONG THE TRIGAN CITY BY-PASS IN HIS USUAL RECKLESS MANNER..."


"SUDDENLY... DISASTER AHEAD!..."
LOOK OUT!

"JANNO NEVER HAD A CHANCE. HE SMASHED STRAIGHT INTO THE OTHER FELLOW."
"BY A NEAR MIRACLE HE ESCAPED WITH HIS LIFE. AN AMBULANCE WAS QUICKLY ON THE SCENE."
"JANNO WAS RUSHED BACK TO THE HOSPITAL."
HIS CONDITION CALLS FOR AN IMMEDIATE BLOOD TRANSFUSION.
KEREN FINISHED HIS STORY AND ADDED A COMMENT WHICH BROUGHT A GLEAM OF INTEREST TO THE WISE OLD EYES OF HIS COMPANION.
AS WE ALL KNOW, JANNO MADE A GOOD RECOVERY. BUT HERE'S THE INTERESTING PART... THE PHYSICIAN WHO ATTENDED HIM AT THE SCENE OF THE ACCIDENT WAS THE SAME FELLOW WHO ATTENDED ROFFA. HIS NAME – TORGA!
AN IMMEDIATE CALL TO THE HOSPITAL BROUGHT A NEGATIVE RESPONSE.
THE PHYSICIAN TORGA HAS BEEN MISSING FOR SEVERAL DAYS.
GET ON TO THE POLICE! TELL THEM TO FIND TORGA!
A DESCRIPTION OF THE MISSING PHYSICIAN WAS FLASHED TO ALL CORNERS OF THE SPRAWLING TRIGAN EMPIRE.
... HEIGHT SEVENTEEN THRUMMS, WEIGHT ONE HUNDRED AND THREE SARNAS. FRESH COMPLEXION. NO SPECIAL DISTINGUISHING FEATURES.

MEANWHILE, BACK ON THE DREAD ISLE OF DESPAIR, IN THE GRIM PRISON FORTRESS THAT CROWNED ITS CRAGGY HEIGHTS.
JANNO AND ROFFA BOTH HEARD THE SECRET VOICE IN THEIR INNER EARS.
YOU WILL NOW COMMENCE THE NEXT PART OF THE MASTER PLAN!
OBEDIENT TO THE STRANGE POWER THAT RULED THEIR LIVES, THE TWO UNLOCKED THE CELL AND LEFT IT, LIKE GUARD AND CONVICT.
IN THIS MANNER THEY REACHED THE COURTYARD WITHOUT MEETING ANYONE.
THE BLACK TOWER! AND INSIDE IT IS THE OBJECT OF ALL OUR EFFORTS!
AND HERE'S HOW WE GET INTO THE TOWER. LISTEN...
SOME TIME LATER, JANNO STEPPED OUT OF THE SHADOWS AND WAS CHALLENGED.
HALT! WHO APPROACHES!
THEN ROFFA LEAPT FROM ABOVE LIKE A BIRD OF PREY.
UNLOCKING THE MASSIVE DOOR OF THE BLACK TOWER, THE TWO COMRADES ENTERED AND JANNO ADDRESSED THE PRISONER WHO STOOD WITHIN.
WE HAVE COME TO RESCUE YOU.
UUUUUUH!


THE PRISONER OF THE BLACK TOWER STARED AT HIS TWO STRANGE VISITORS.
YOU ARE RASPARDI – FORMER INTERNATIONAL GANG-LEADER WITH A HORDE OF MILLIONS HIDDEN AWAY ON THE OUTSIDE?
YES! WHAT OF IT?

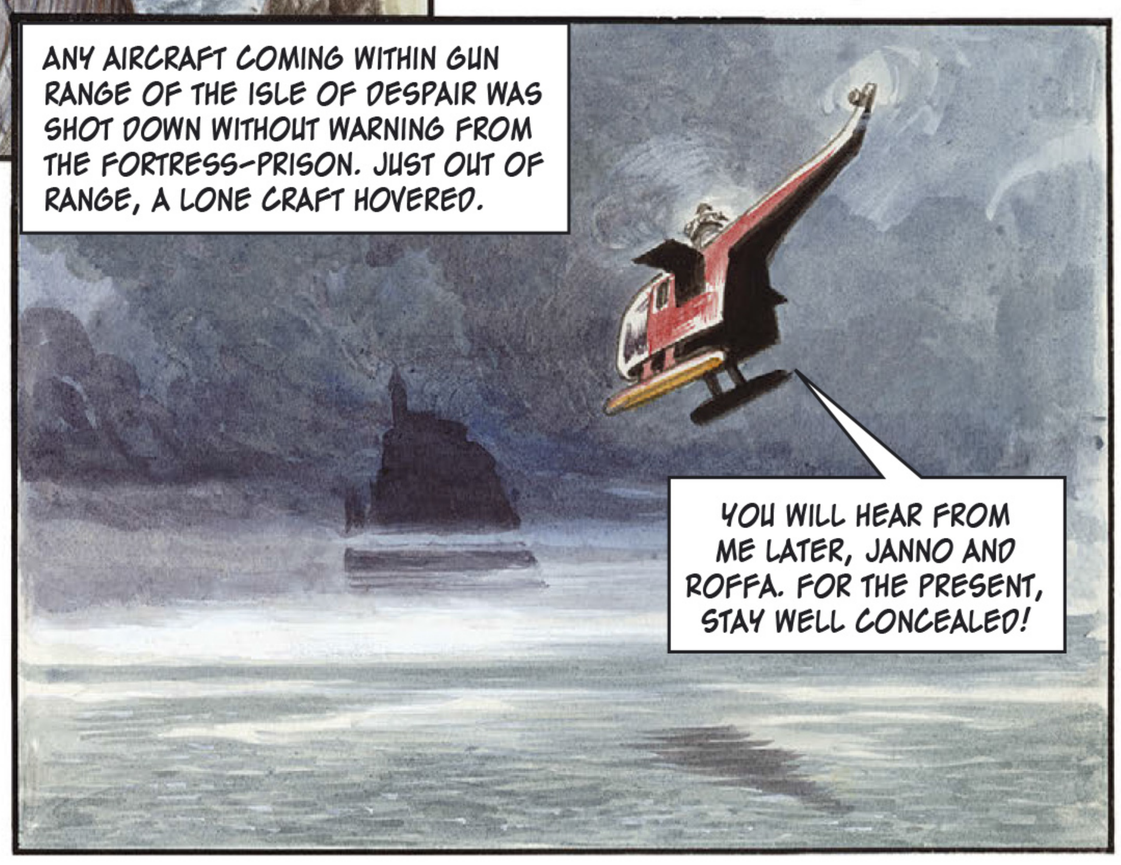
I JUST WANTED TO MAKE SURE WE'D GOT THE RIGHT FELLOW!
UUUUUH!

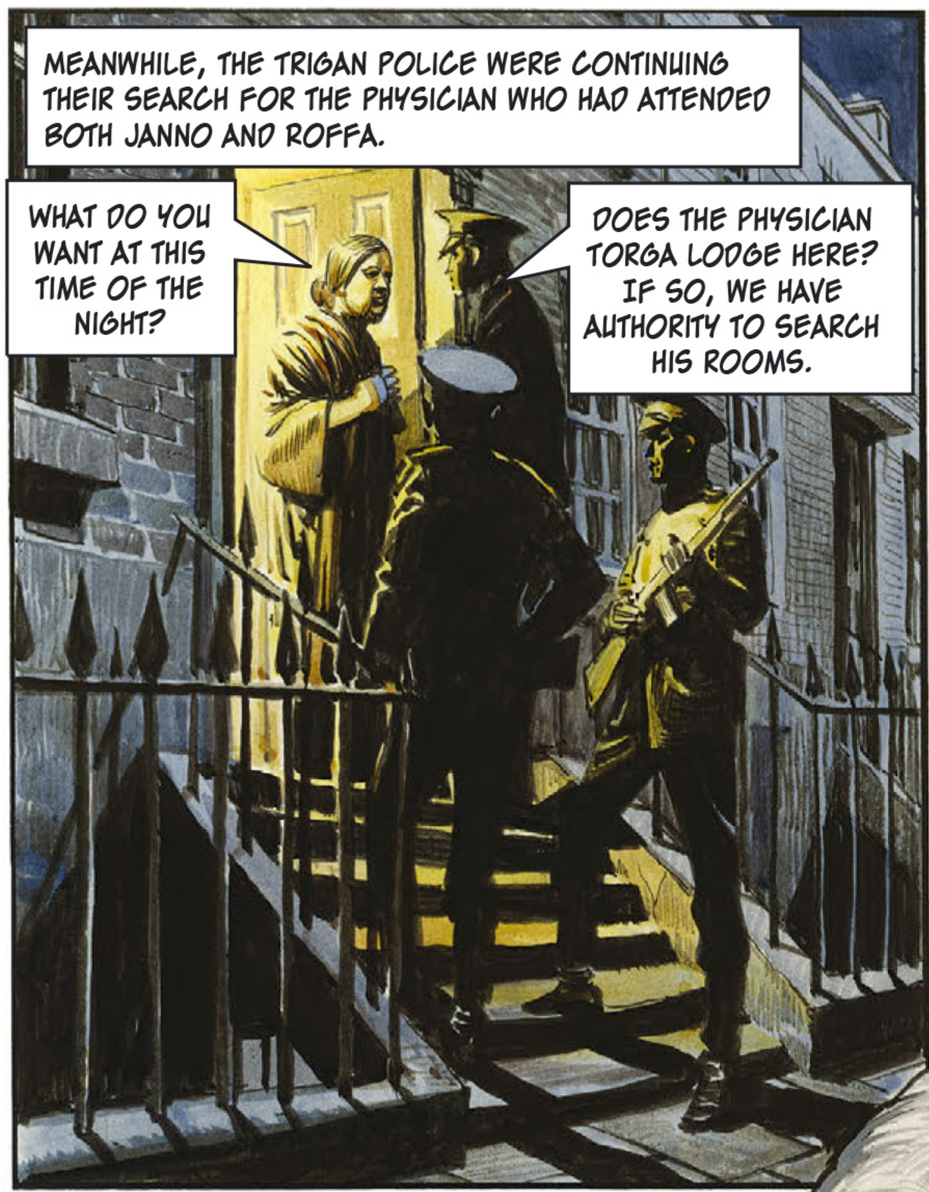
THEY LEFT THE TOWER WITH THE UNCONSCIOUS RASPARDI, LOCKING THE MASSIVE DOOR BEHIND THEM. THEN THEY SLUNG THE LIMP FIGURE ON TO JANNO'S BACK.
TIE HIS WRISTS TIGHTLY. WE DON'T WANT HIM TO FALL AND BREAK HIS NECK.

THE TWO MEN SCALED THE SHEER WALL OF THE BLACK TOWER WITH THEIR SENSELESS BURDEN.
TAKE IT EASY, JANNO. YOU'VE GOT A GOOD FOOTHOLD THERE. HAVE A SHORT REST AND I'LL RELIEVE YOU OF SOME OF THE WEIGHT.

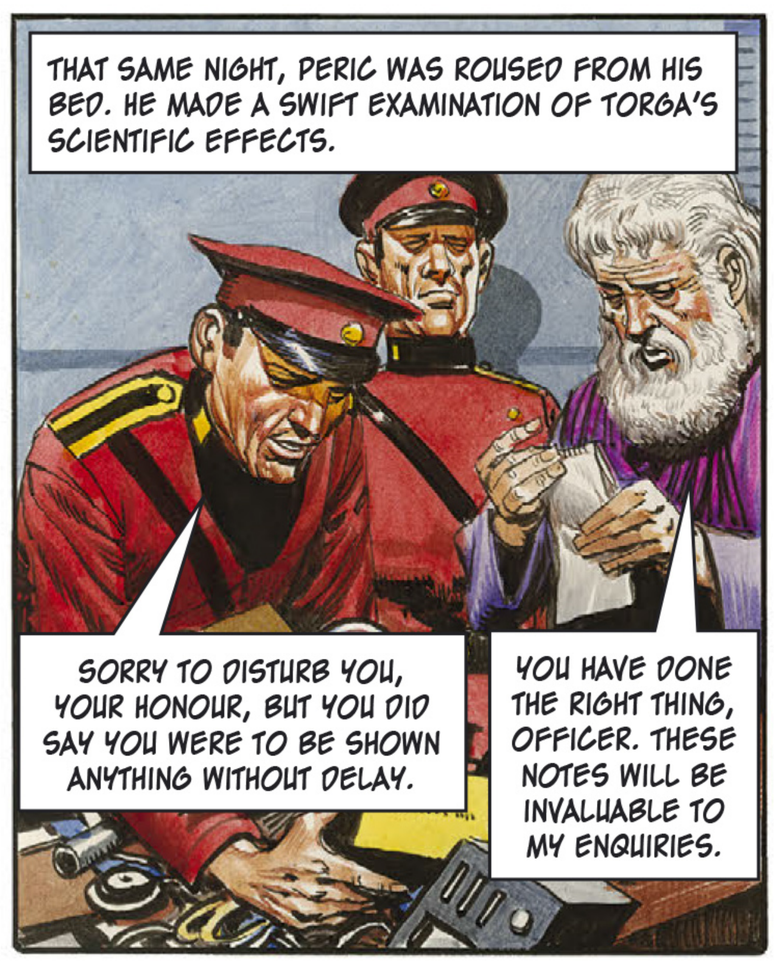
WHEN RASPARDI'S EYES FLICKERED OPEN, HE WAS LYING ON A PERILOUS PERCH AT THE TOP OF THE TOWER.
IT WAS SAFER TO HAVE YOU UNCONSCIOUS MY FRIEND. AS A NON-CLIMBER, YOU MIGHT HAVE PANICKED UNDER THE STRAIN.
WHERE AM I? AND WHY DID YOU STRIKE ME?
AS TO WHERE YOU ARE – YOU ARE IN A PLACE OF FREEDOM, MORE OR LESS!

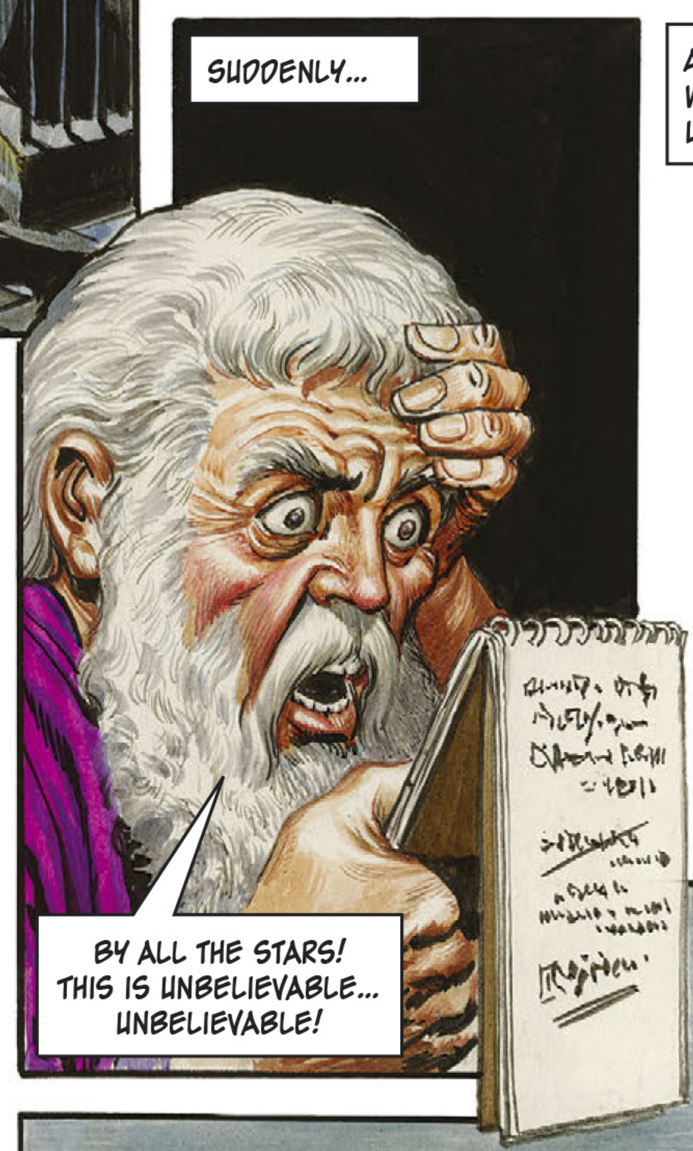
IT WAS THEN THAT JANNO AND ROFFA BOTH HEARD THE VOICE IN THEIR INNER EARS.
WELL DONE! YOU WILL NOW REMAIN WHERE YOU ARE TILL THE TIME COMES TO CARRY OUT THE NEXT PART OF THE MASTER ESCAPE PLAN.

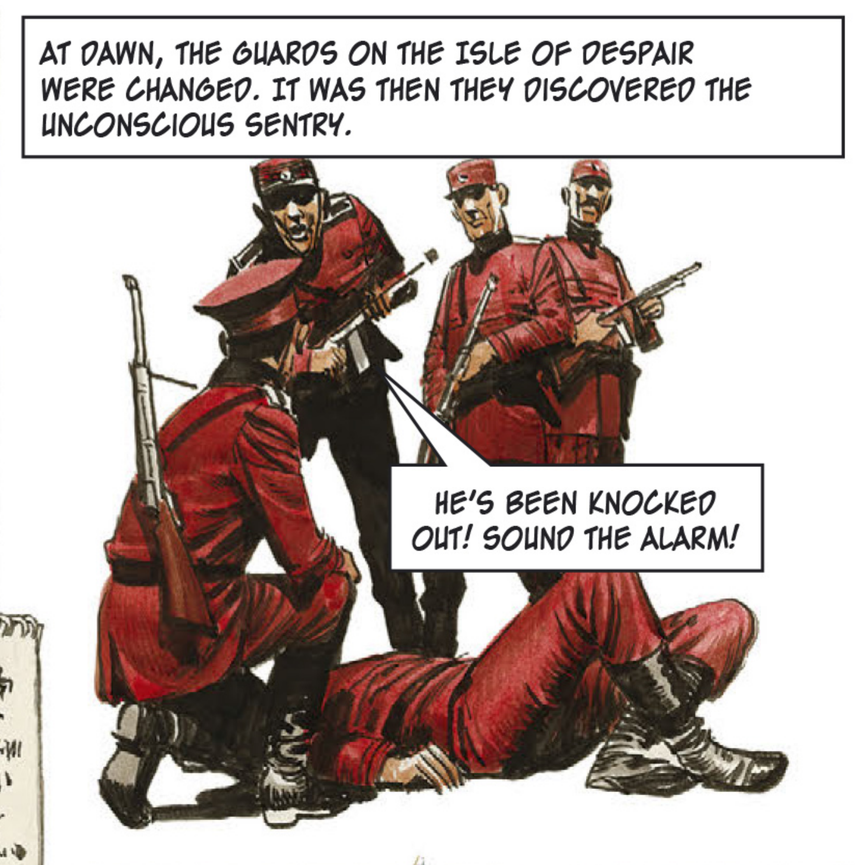

ANY AIRCRAFT COMING WITHIN GUN RANGE OF THE ISLE OF DESPAIR WAS SHOT DOWN WITHOUT WARNING FROM THE FORTRESS-PRISON. JUST OUT OF RANGE, A LONE CRAFT HOVERED.
YOU WILL HEAR FROM ME LATER, JANNO AND ROFFA. FOR THE PRESENT, STAY WELL CONCEALED!

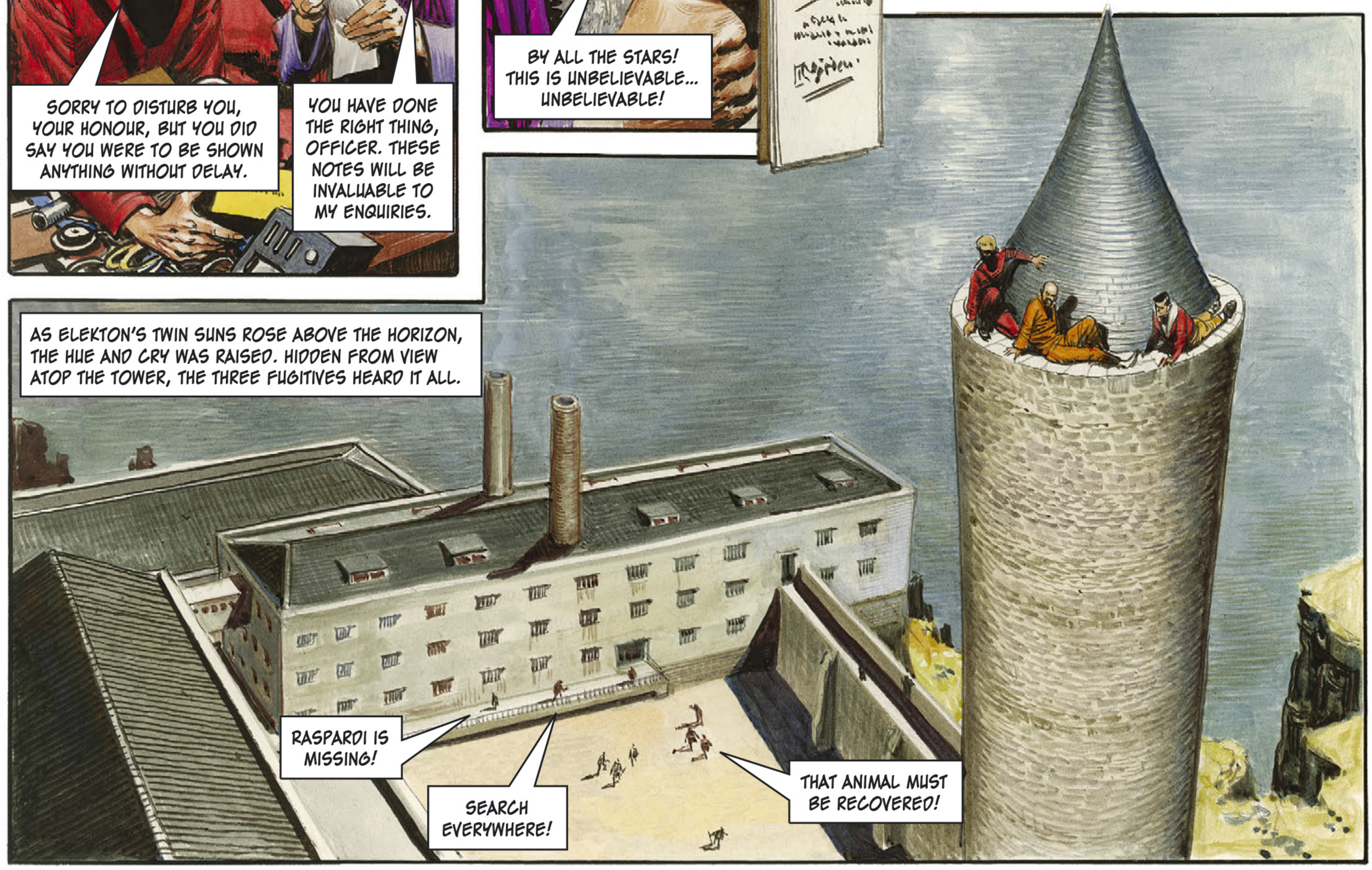

MEANWHILE, THE TRIGAN POLICE WERE CONTINUING THEIR SEARCH FOR THE PHYSICIAN WHO HAD ATTENDED BOTH JANNO AND ROFFA.
WHAT DO YOU WANT AT THIS TIME OF THE NIGHT?
DOES THE PHYSICIAN TORGA LODGE HERE? IF SO, WE HAVE AUTHORITY TO SEARCH HIS ROOMS.

THE SEARCH WAS MADE.
ALL THIS STUFF HAD BETTER BE TAKEN TO PERIC. HE WANTS TO SEE ANYTHING OF A SCIENTIFIC NATURE.


THAT SAME NIGHT, PERIC WAS ROUSED FROM HIS BED. HE MADE A SWIFT EXAMINATION OF TORGA'S SCIENTIFIC EFFECTS.
SORRY TO DISTURB YOU, YOUR HONOUR, BUT YOU DID SAY YOU WERE TO BE SHOWN ANYTHING WITHOUT DELAY.
YOU HAVE DONE THE RIGHT THING, OFFICER. THESE NOTES WILL BE INVALUABLE TO MY ENQUIRIES.


SUDDENLY...
BY ALL THE STARS! THIS IS UNBELIEVABLE... UNBELIEVABLE!


AT DAWN, THE GUARDS ON THE ISLE OF DESPAIR WERE CHANGED. IT WAS THEN THEY DISCOVERED THE UNCONSCIOUS SENTRY.
HE'S BEEN KNOCKED OUT! SOUND THE ALARM!

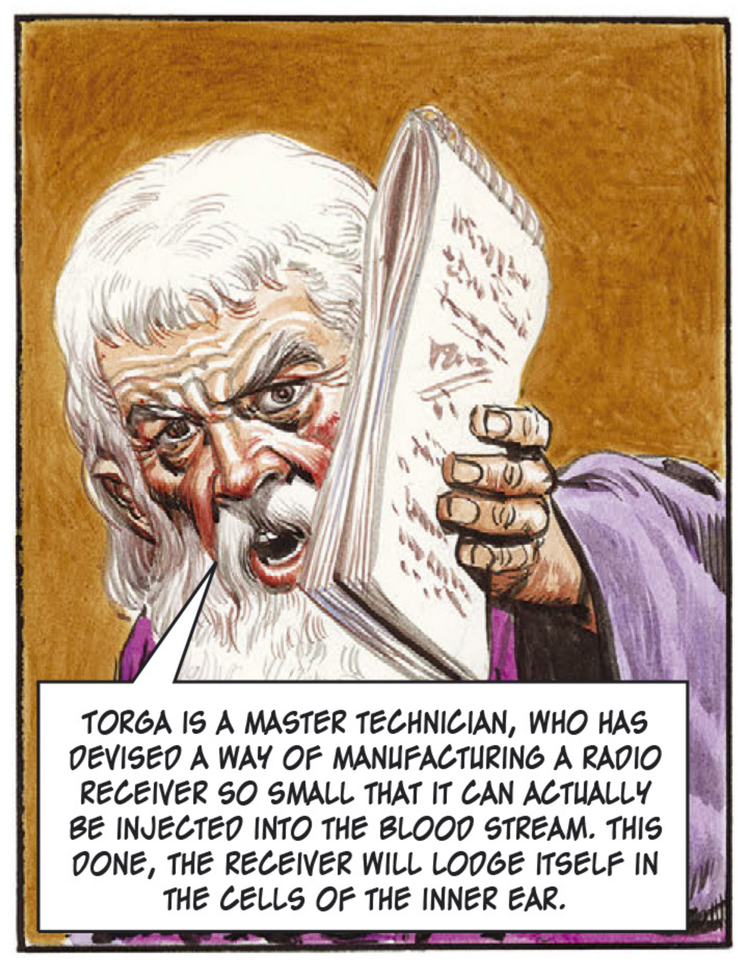

AS ELEKTON'S TWIN SUNS ROSE ABOVE THE HORIZON, THE HUE AND CRY WAS RAISED. HIDDEN FROM VIEW ATOP THE TOWER, THE THREE FUGITIVES HEARD IT ALL.
RASPARDI IS MISSING!
SEARCH EVERYWHERE!
THAT ANIMAL MUST BE RECOVERED!

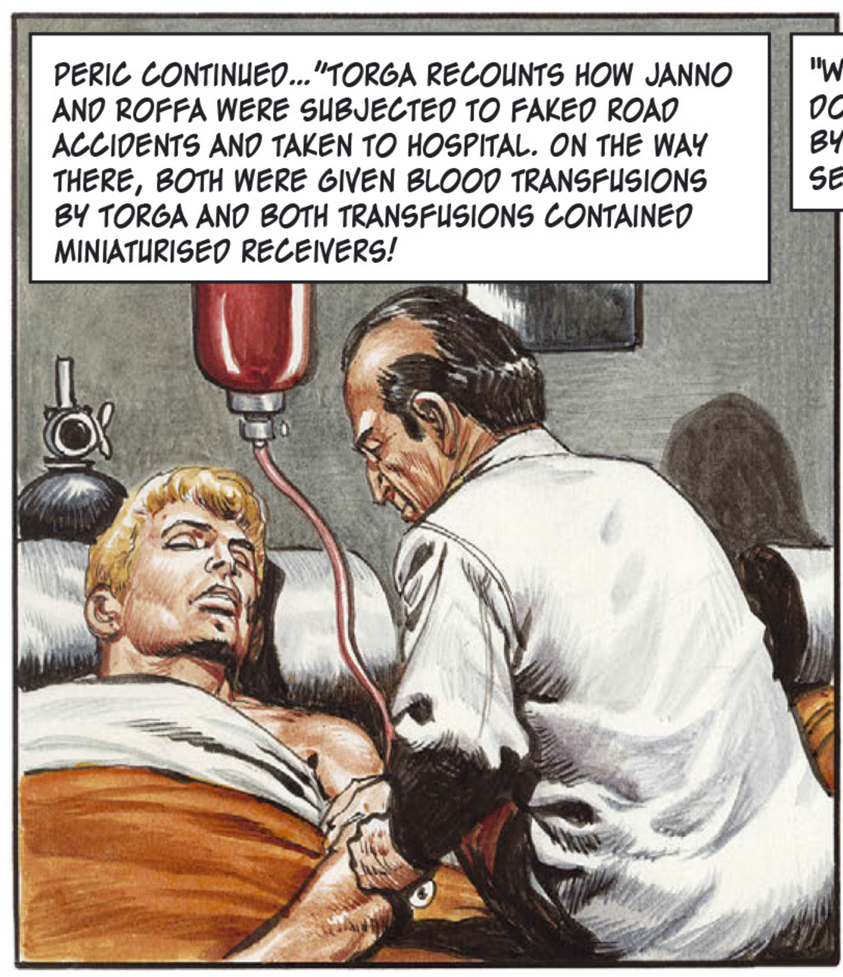
AS THE DAY WORE ON, PANIC REIGNED AMONG THE GUARDS OF THE PRISON ISLE.
I'VE JUST BEEN DOWN TO FEED THE CONVICT ROFFA, SIR AND HE'S DISAPPEARED, TOO!
ANOTHER GONE? IT'S AN ORGANISED CONSPIRACY!

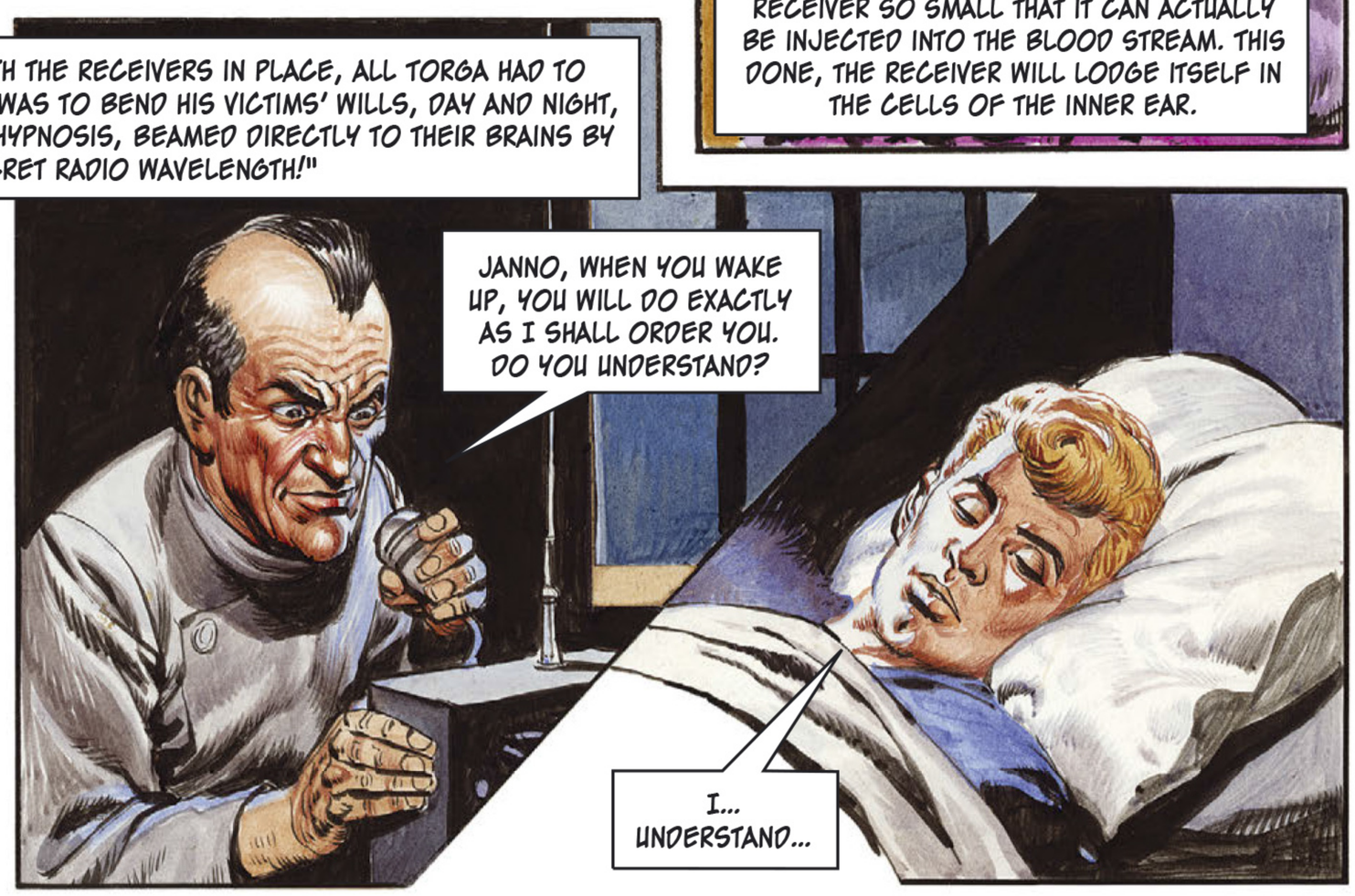
SAFE ON THEIR LOFTY PERCH, JANNO, ROFFA AND RASPARDI LOOKED DOWN.
WE'VE GOT THOSE FOOLS REALLY WORRIED!
QUIET! MY VOICE HAS BEGUN SPEAKING TO ME!

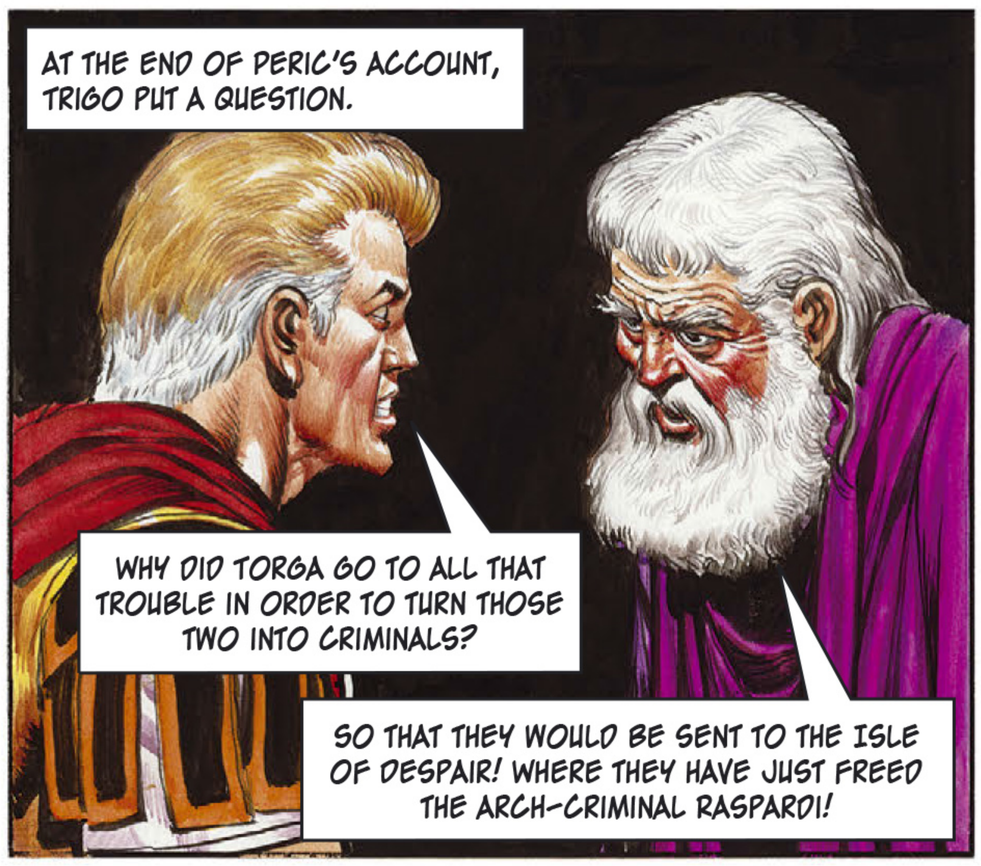
THE VOICE THAT HE COULD NOT DISOBEY SOUNDED IN JANNO'S INNER EAR.
YOU, JANNO, WILL DESCEND FROM THE TOWER AFTER DARK. YOU WILL DESTROY THE ISLAND'S ANTI-AIRCRAFT CAPABILITY. HERE IS HOW YOU WILL DO IT...

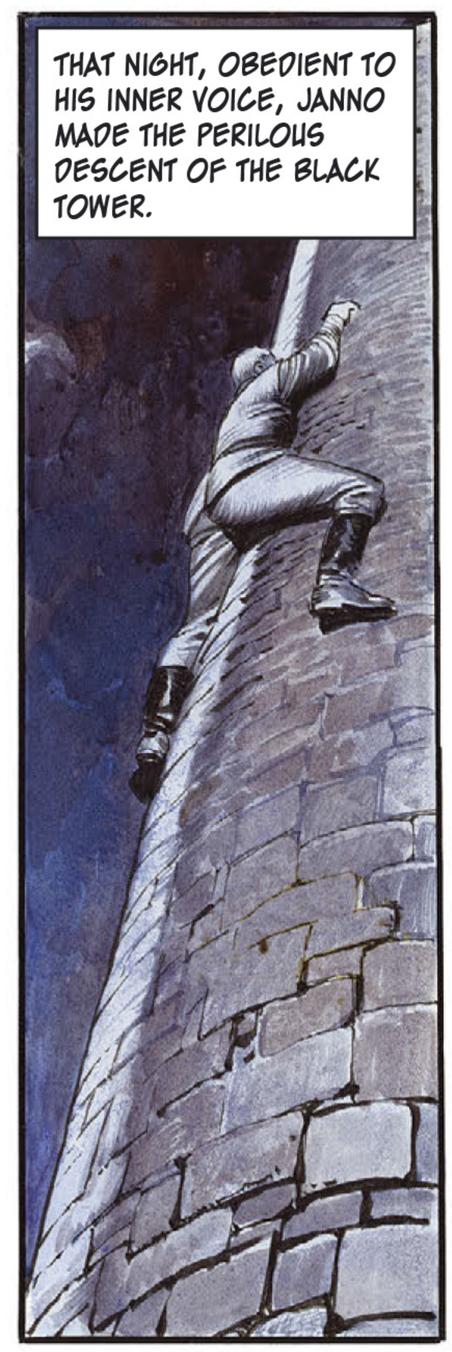
AT ABOUT THAT TIME, THE GREAT SCIENTIST PERIC HAD SOUGHT AN URGENT AUDIENCE WITH THE EMPEROR.
YOUR MAJESTY, WE HAVE FOUND THE SCIENTIFIC NOTEBOOKS OF THE MISSING PHYSICIAN, TORGA!


TORGA IS A MASTER TECHNICIAN, WHO HAS DEVISED A WAY OF MANUFACTURING A RADIO RECEIVER SO SMALL THAT IT CAN ACTUALLY BE INJECTED INTO THE BLOOD STREAM. THIS DONE, THE RECEIVER WILL LODGE ITSELF IN THE CELLS OF THE INNER EAR.

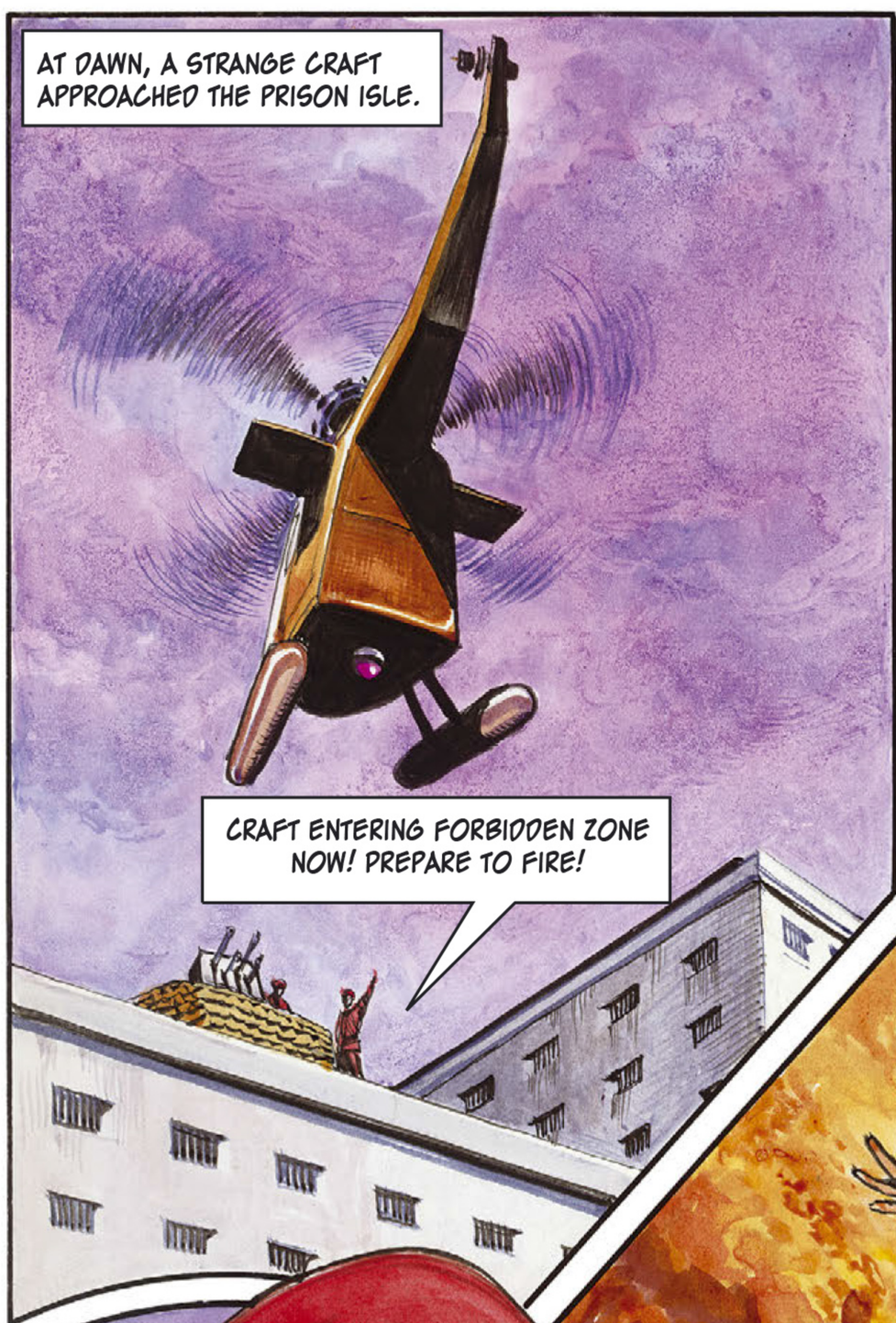

PERIC CONTINUED..."TORGA RECOUNTS HOW JANNO AND ROFFA WERE SUBJECTED TO FAKED ROAD ACCIDENTS AND TAKEN TO HOSPITAL. ON THE WAY THERE, BOTH WERE GIVEN BLOOD TRANSFUSIONS BY TORGA AND BOTH TRANSFUSIONS CONTAINED MINIATURISED RECEIVERS!


"WITH THE RECEIVERS IN PLACE, ALL TORGA HAD TO DO WAS TO BEND HIS VICTIMS' WILLS, DAY AND NIGHT, BY HYPNOSIS, BEAMED DIRECTLY TO THEIR BRAINS BY SECRET RADIO WAVELENGTH!"
JANNO, WHEN YOU WAKE UP, YOU WILL DO EXACTLY AS I SHALL ORDER YOU. DO YOU UNDERSTAND?
I... UNDERSTAND...

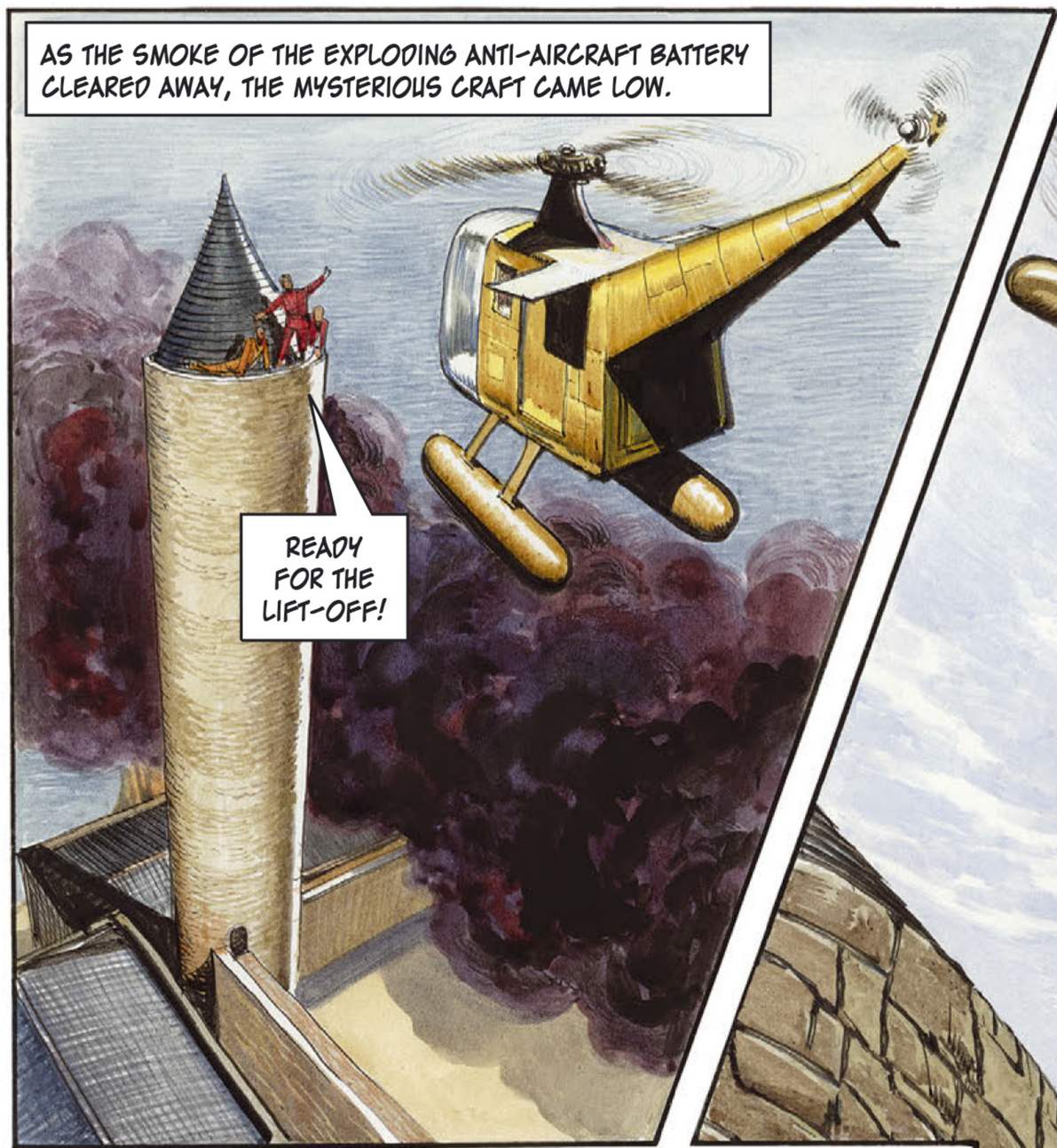

AT THE END OF PERIC'S ACCOUNT, TRIGO PUT A QUESTION.
WHY DID TORGA GO TO ALL THAT TROUBLE IN ORDER TO TURN THOSE TWO INTO CRIMINALS?
SO THAT THEY WOULD BE SENT TO THE ISLE OF DESPAIR! WHERE THEY HAVE JUST FREED THE ARCH-CRIMINAL RASPARDI!


THAT NIGHT, OBEDIENT TO HIS INNER VOICE, JANNO MADE THE PERILOUS DESCENT OF THE BLACK TOWER.

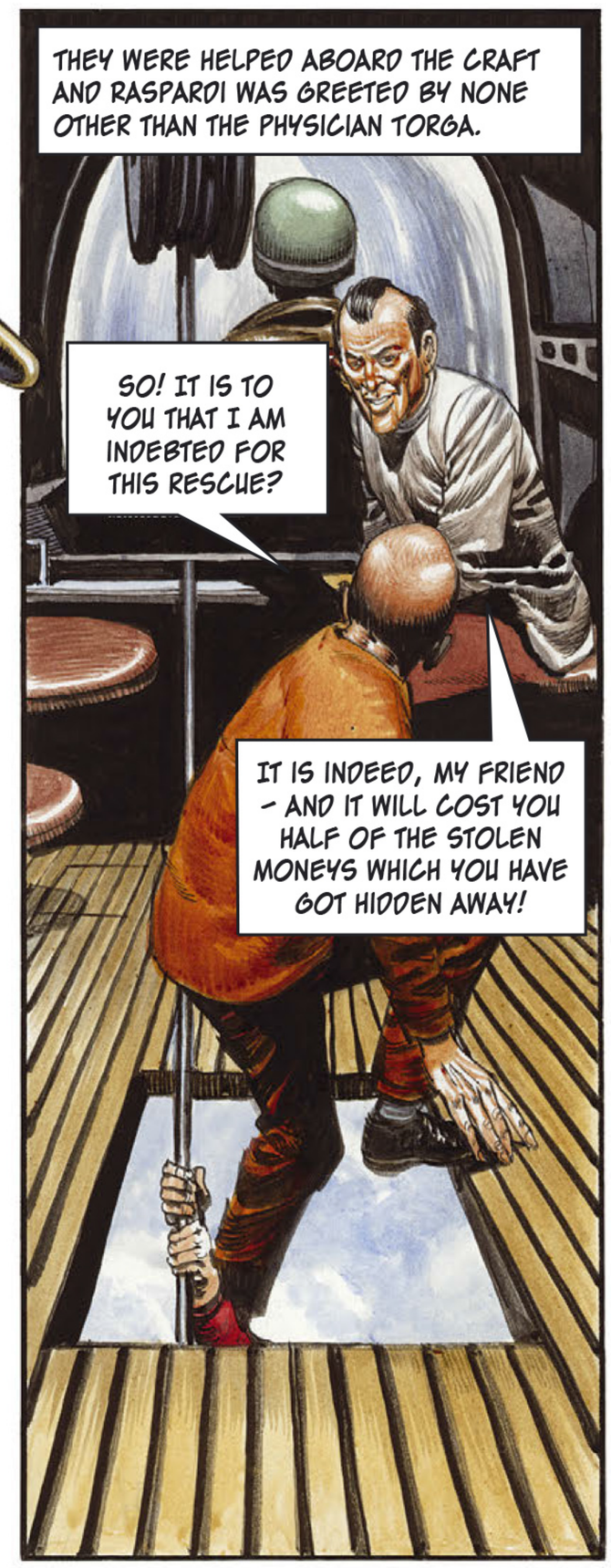
UNSEEN, HE TAMPERED WITH THE FUSE MECHANISM OF THE FIRST PROJECTILE IN THE ANTI-AIRCRAFT BATTERY.
WHEN THAT WAS DONE, HE RETURNED TO HIS HIDING PLACE.


AT DAWN, A STRANGE CRAFT APPROACHED THE PRISON ISLE.
CRAFT ENTERING FORBIDDEN ZONE NOW! PREPARE TO FIRE!

FIRE!

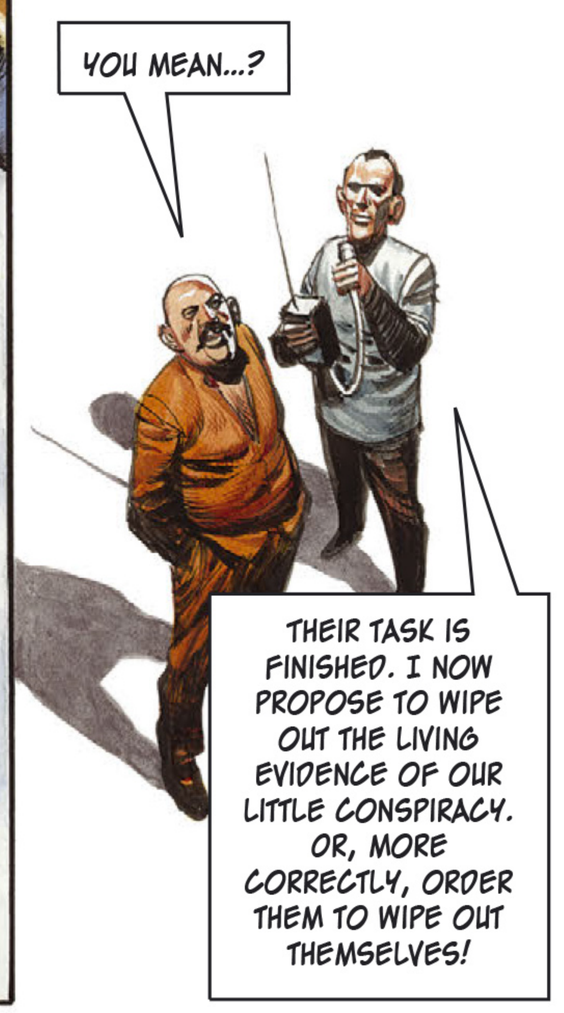

AS THE SMOKE OF THE EXPLODING ANTI-AIRCRAFT BATTERY CLEARED AWAY, THE MYSTERIOUS CRAFT CAME LOW.
READY FOR THE LIFT-OFF!

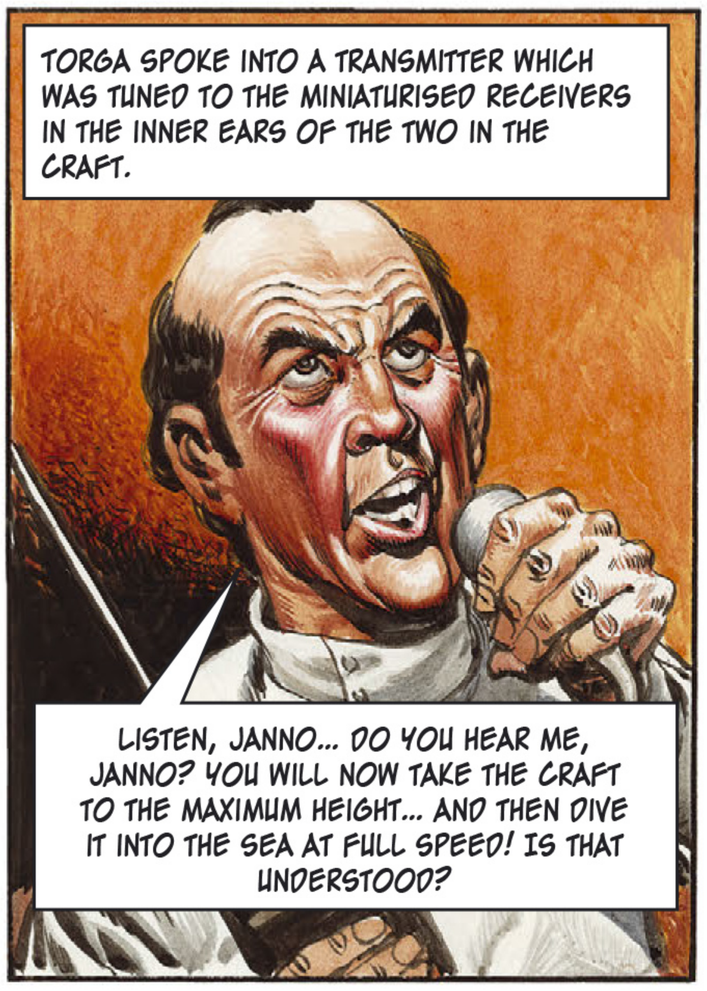
ALL THREE CONVICTS WERE LIFTED FROM THE TOP OF THE BLACK TOWER.

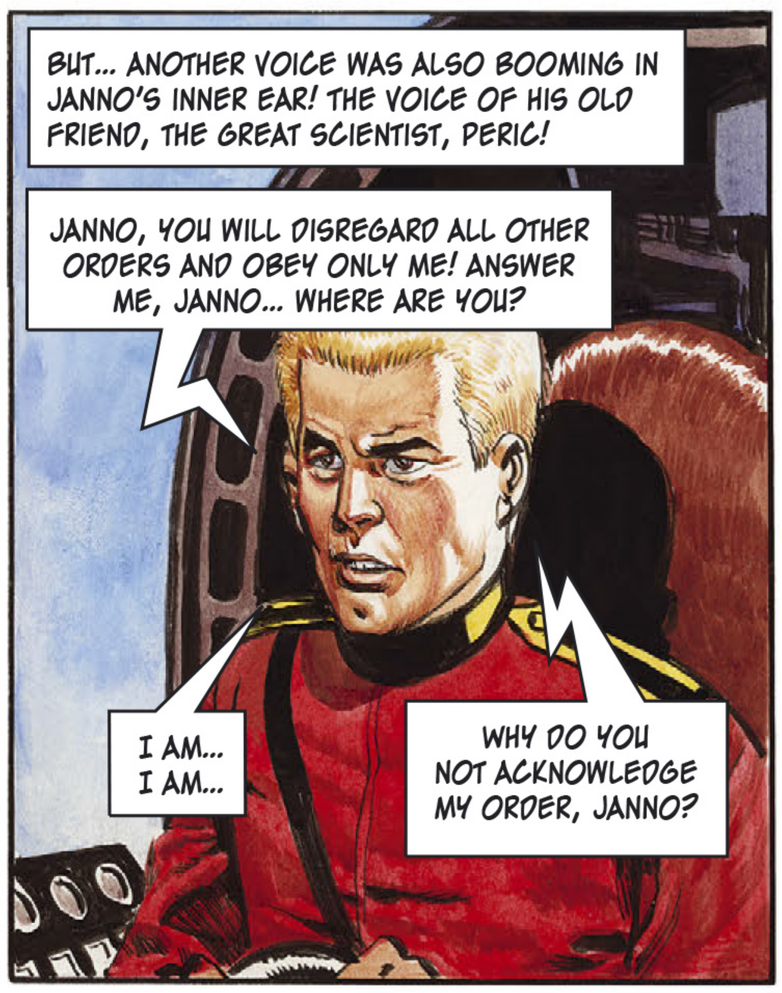

THEY WERE HELPED ABOARD THE CRAFT AND RASPARDI WAS GREETED BY NONE OTHER THAN THE PHYSICIAN TORGA.
SO! IT IS TO YOU THAT I AM INDEBTED FOR THIS RESCUE?
IT IS INDEED, MY FRIEND - AND IT WILL COST YOU HALF OF THE STOLEN MONEYS WHICH YOU HAVE GOT HIDDEN AWAY!

A FAST AUTOMOBILE WAITED ON A LONELY ROAD ON THE MAINLAND.
WHAT NOW, TORGA?
NOW, RASPARDI, WE DRIVE TO A HIDE-OUT WHERE YOU WILL REMAIN TILL YOU HAVE PAID OVER THE MONEY. AND FOR OUR FRIENDS JANNO AND ROFFA...

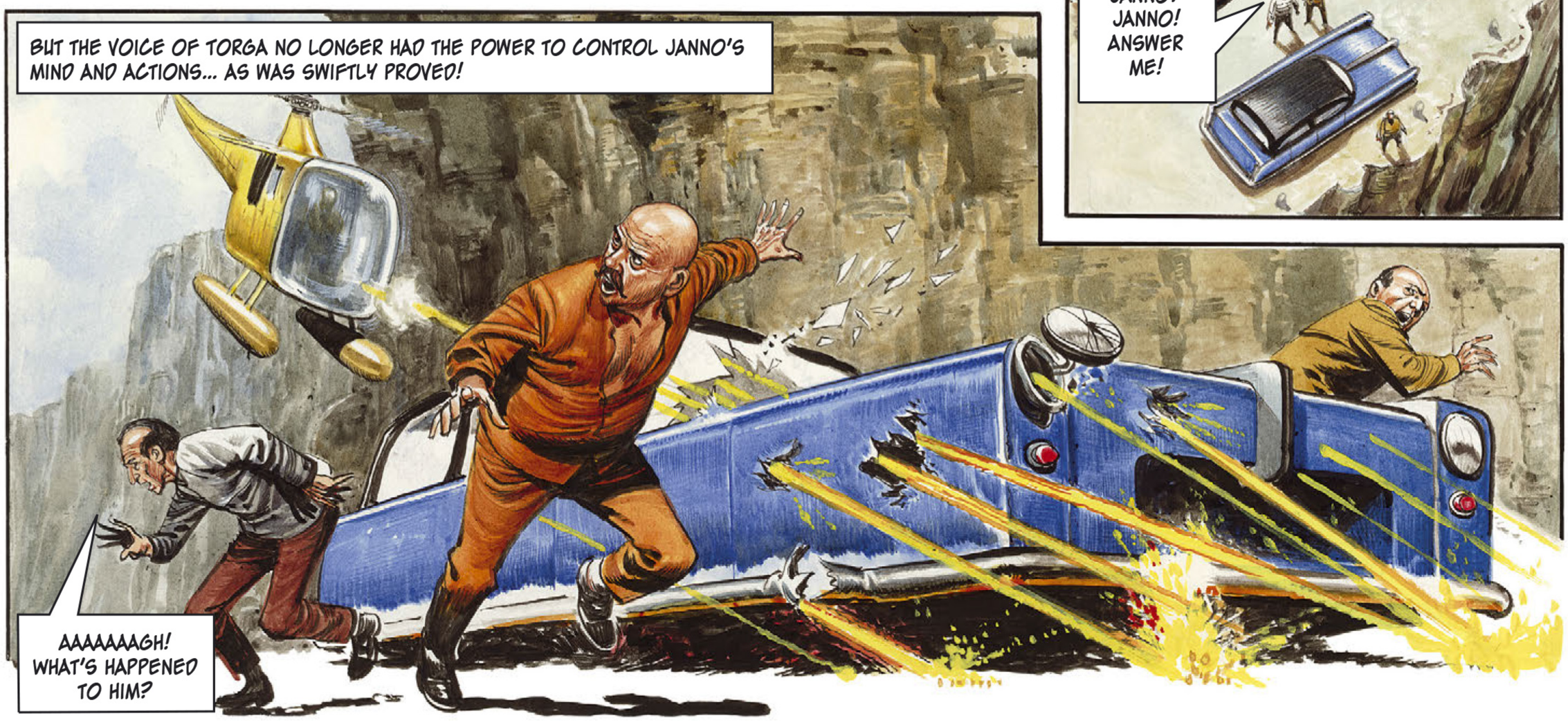
JANNO AND ROFFA REMAINED ON THE CRAFT WHEN THE OTHERS HAD LEFT IT. AT A CURT ORDER FROM TORGA, JANNO PILOTED SKYWARDS AGAIN.
WHERE ARE THEY GOING?
THEY, MY FRIEND, ARE GOING TO DESTRUCTION!

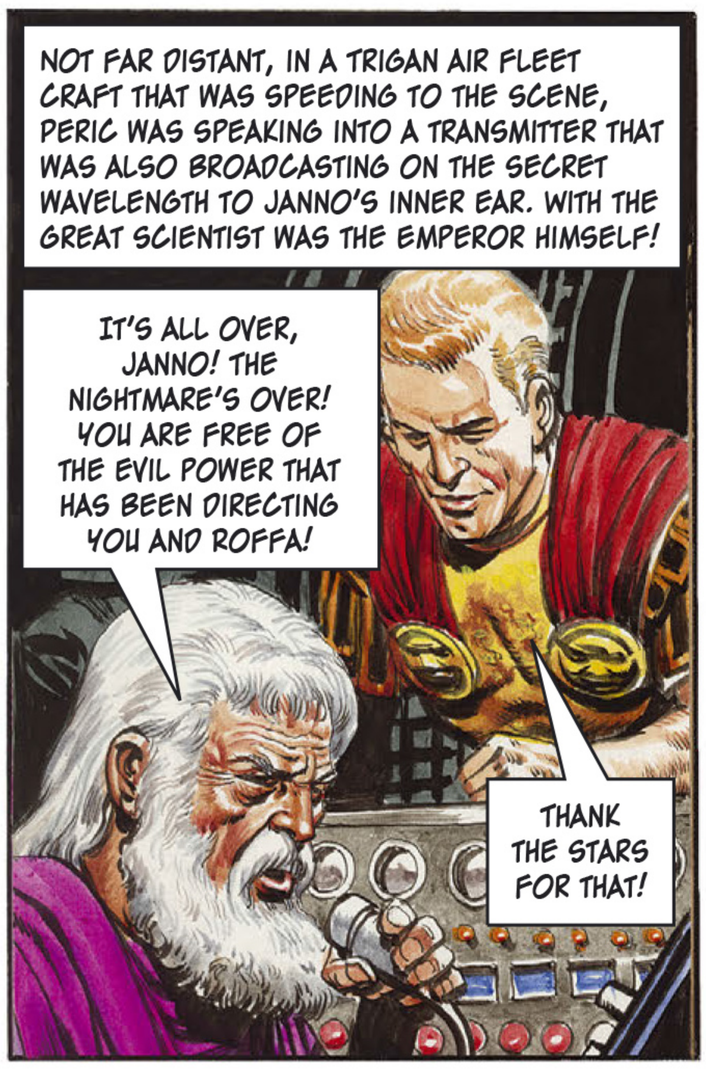

YOU MEAN...?
THEIR TASK IS FINISHED. I NOW PROPOSE TO WIPE OUT THE LIVING EVIDENCE OF OUR LITTLE CONSPIRACY. OR, MORE CORRECTLY, ORDER THEM TO WIPE OUT THEMSELVES!

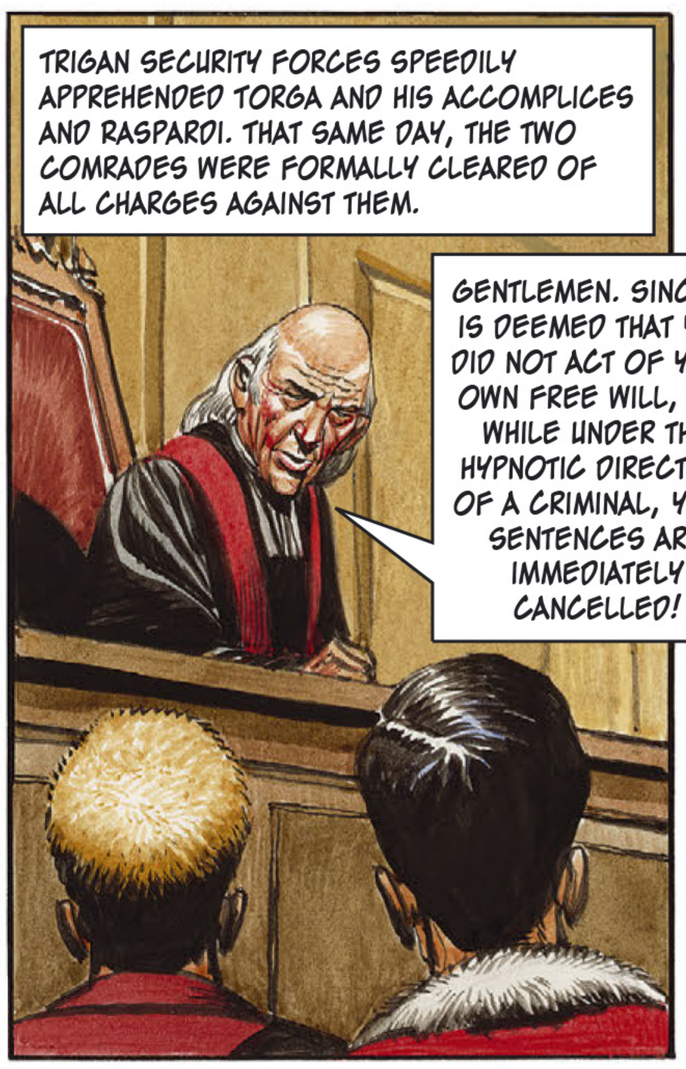

TORGA SPOKE INTO A TRANSMITTER WHICH WAS TUNED TO THE MINIATURISED RECEIVERS IN THE INNER EARS OF THE TWO IN THE CRAFT.
LISTEN, JANNO... DO YOU HEAR ME, JANNO? YOU WILL NOW TAKE THE CRAFT TO THE MAXIMUM HEIGHT... AND THEN DIVE IT INTO THE SEA AT FULL SPEED! IS THAT UNDERSTOOD?

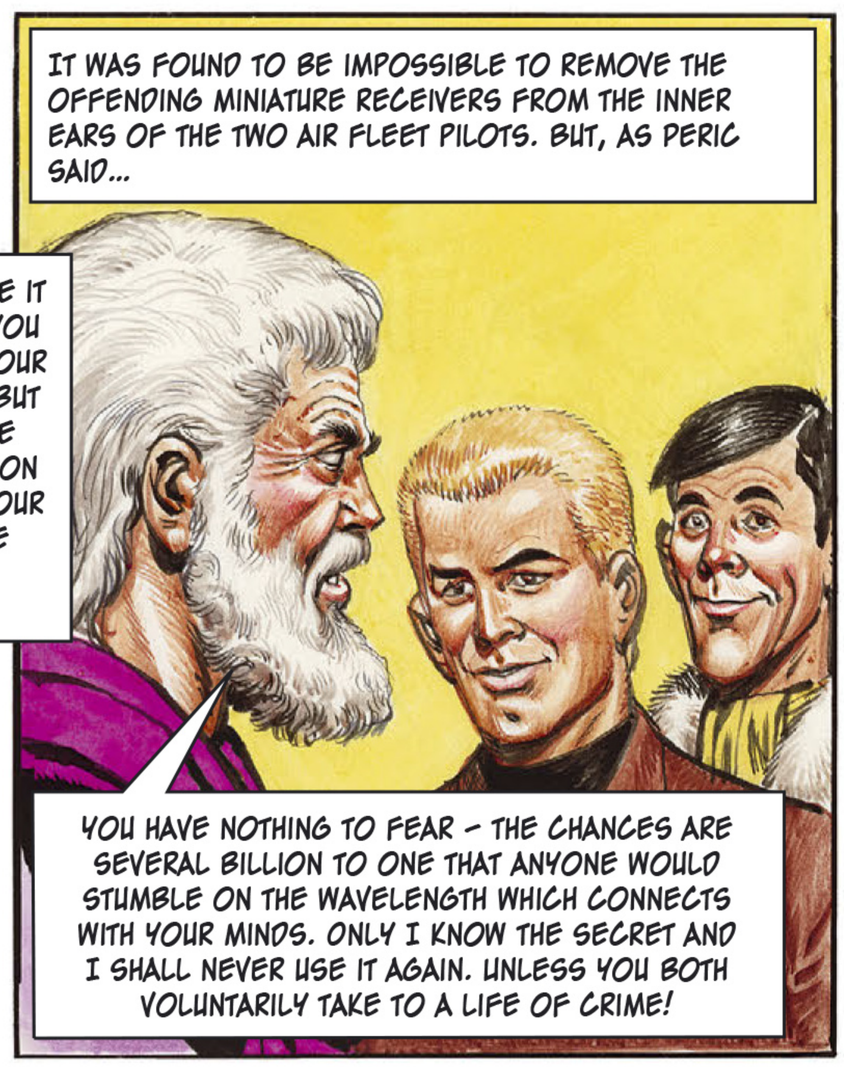

BUT... ANOTHER VOICE WAS ALSO BOOMING IN JANNO'S INNER EAR! THE VOICE OF HIS OLD FRIEND, THE GREAT SCIENTIST, PERIC!
JANNO, YOU WILL DISREGARD ALL OTHER ORDERS AND OBEY ONLY ME! ANSWER ME, JANNO... WHERE ARE YOU?
I AM... I AM...
WHY DO YOU NOT ACKNOWLEDGE MY ORDER, JANNO?

MOMENTS LATER, THE CRAFT CAME SCREAMING DOWN IN A POWER DIVE.
WHAT ARE YOU DOING, JANNO? JANNO! ANSWER ME!


BUT THE VOICE OF TORGA NO LONGER HAD THE POWER TO CONTROL JANNO'S MIND AND ACTIONS... AS WAS SWIFTLY PROVED!
AAAAAAAGH! WHAT'S HAPPENED TO HIM?


NOT FAR DISTANT, IN A TRIGAN AIR FLEET CRAFT THAT WAS SPEEDING TO THE SCENE, PERIC WAS SPEAKING INTO A TRANSMITTER THAT WAS ALSO BROADCASTING ON THE SECRET WAVELENGTH TO JANNO'S INNER EAR. WITH THE GREAT SCIENTIST WAS THE EMPEROR HIMSELF!
IT'S ALL OVER, JANNO! THE NIGHTMARE'S OVER! YOU ARE FREE OF THE EVIL POWER THAT HAS BEEN DIRECTING YOU AND ROFFA!
THANK THE STARS FOR THAT!


TRIGAN SECURITY FORCES SPEEDILY APPREHENDED TORGA AND HIS ACCOMPLICES AND RASPARDI. THAT SAME DAY, THE TWO COMRADES WERE FORMALLY CLEARED OF ALL CHARGES AGAINST THEM.
GENTLEMEN. SINCE IT IS DEEMED THAT YOU DID NOT ACT OF YOUR OWN FREE WILL, BUT WHILE UNDER THE HYPNOTIC DIRECTION OF A CRIMINAL, YOUR SENTENCES ARE IMMEDIATELY CANCELLED!


IT WAS FOUND TO BE IMPOSSIBLE TO REMOVE THE OFFENDING MINIATURE RECEIVERS FROM THE INNER EARS OF THE TWO AIR FLEET PILOTS. BUT, AS PERIC SAID...
YOU HAVE NOTHING TO FEAR – THE CHANCES ARE SEVERAL BILLION TO ONE THAT ANYONE WOULD STUMBLE ON THE WAVELENGTH WHICH CONNECTS WITH YOUR MINDS. ONLY I KNOW THE SECRET AND I SHALL NEVER USE IT AGAIN. UNLESS YOU BOTH VOLUNTARILY TAKE TO A LIFE OF CRIME!

LV

THE TRIGAN EMPIRE

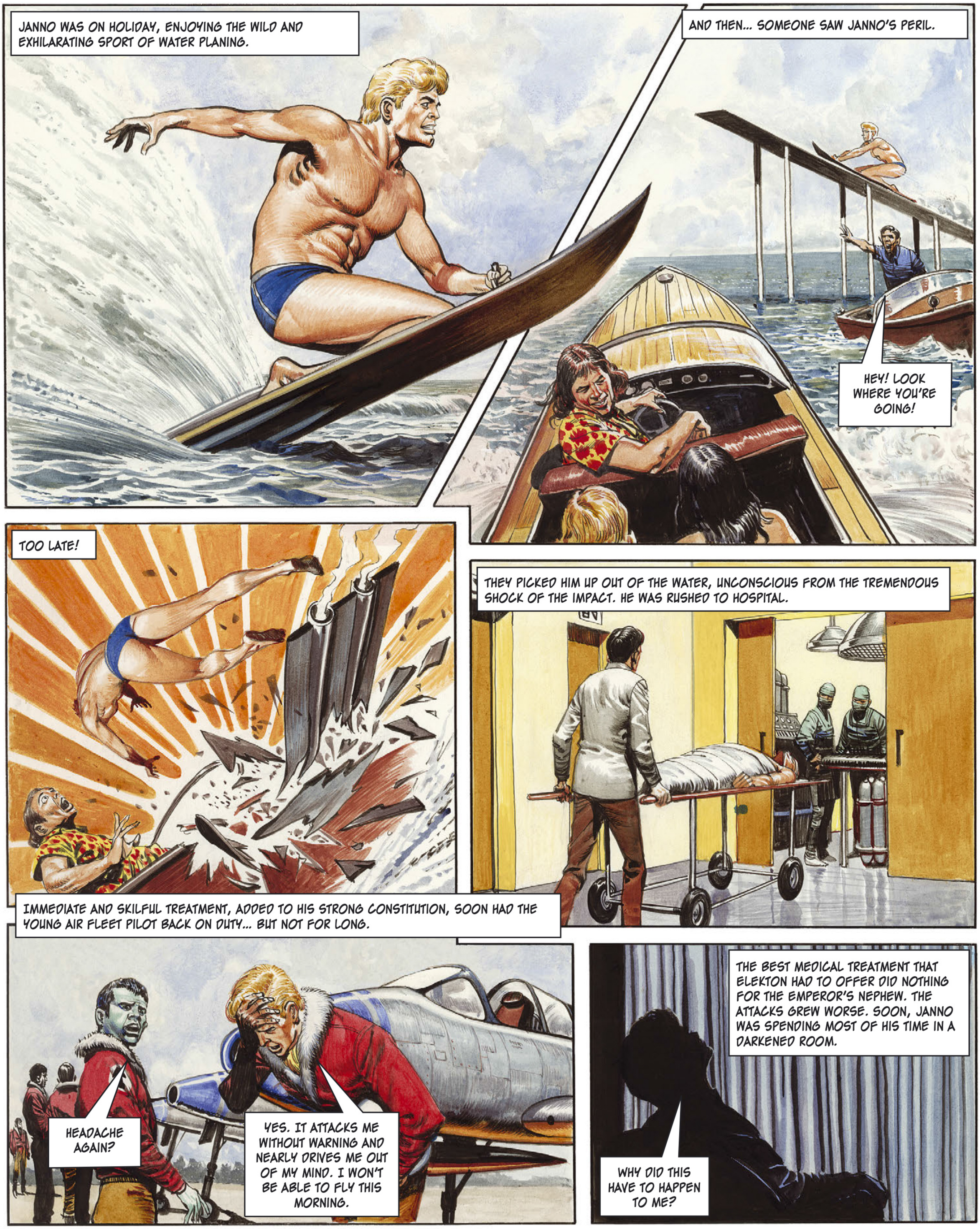
NASTOR, THE FAITH HEALER

Originally published in ***Look and Learn*** 718 - 723

18th October 1975 – 22nd November 1975

Story by Mike Butterworth

Art by Don Lawrence


JANNO WAS ON HOLIDAY, ENJOYING THE WILD AND EXHILARATING SPORT OF WATER PLANING.
AND THEN... SOMEONE SAW JANNO'S PERIL.
HEY! LOOK WHERE YOU'RE GOING!
TOO LATE!
THEY PICKED HIM UP OUT OF THE WATER, UNCONSCIOUS FROM THE TREMENDOUS SHOCK OF THE IMPACT. HE WAS RUSHED TO HOSPITAL.
IMMEDIATE AND SKILFUL TREATMENT, ADDED TO HIS STRONG CONSTITUTION, SOON HAD THE YOUNG AIR FLEET PILOT BACK ON DUTY... BUT NOT FOR LONG.
HEADACHE AGAIN?
YES. IT ATTACKS ME WITHOUT WARNING AND NEARLY DRIVES ME OUT OF MY MIND. I WON'T BE ABLE TO FLY THIS MORNING.
THE BEST MEDICAL TREATMENT THAT ELEKTON HAD TO OFFER DID NOTHING FOR THE EMPEROR'S NEPHEW. THE ATTACKS GREW WORSE. SOON, JANNO WAS SPENDING MOST OF HIS TIME IN A DARKENED ROOM.
WHY DID THIS HAVE TO HAPPEN TO ME?

NASTOR WAS A PROFESSIONAL GAMBLER, WHOSE ONE AIM IN LIFE WAS TO MAKE A QUICK AND EASY FORTUNE. AN AMBITION THAT, ALAS, FOREVER SEEMED TO BE THWARTED.
I'VE GOT A FEELING THAT TONIGHT IS GOING TO BE MY NIGHT. I'LL RISK EVERYTHING I HAVE ON ONE SPIN OF THE WHEEL.

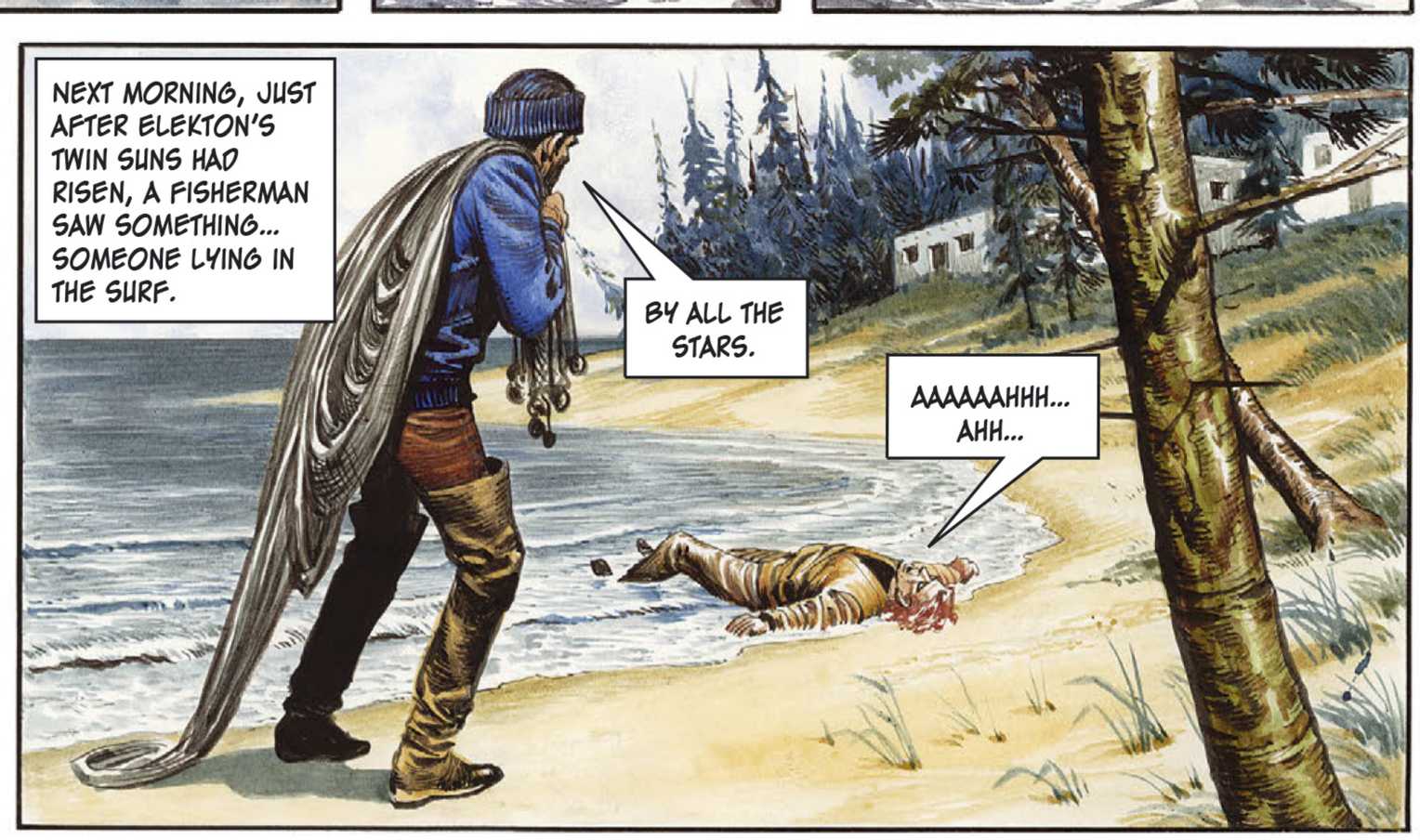
NEEDLESS TO SAY, ON THIS OCCASION, NASTOR'S LUCK FAILED HIM AGAIN.
I'M RUINED! RUINED!

HE WALKED OUT INTO THE NIGHT. THE STORMY SKY MATCHED THE TURMOIL IN HIS MIND.
WHAT AM I GOING TO DO?

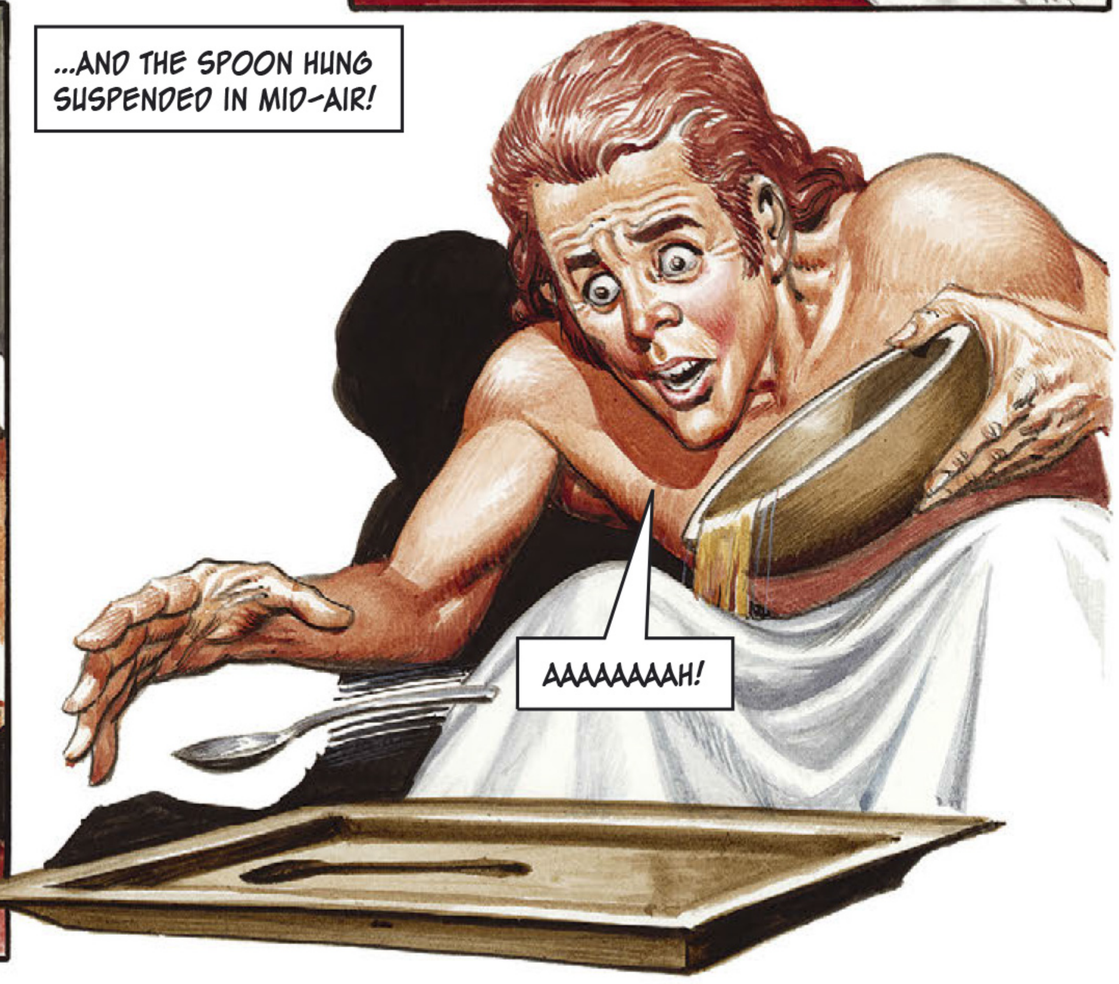
HE WALKED TO THE END OF THE QUAY AND THEN IT HAPPENED – A FLASH OF LURID LIGHT, A DEAFENING CRASH OF THUNDER...
EAAAAAAGHH!

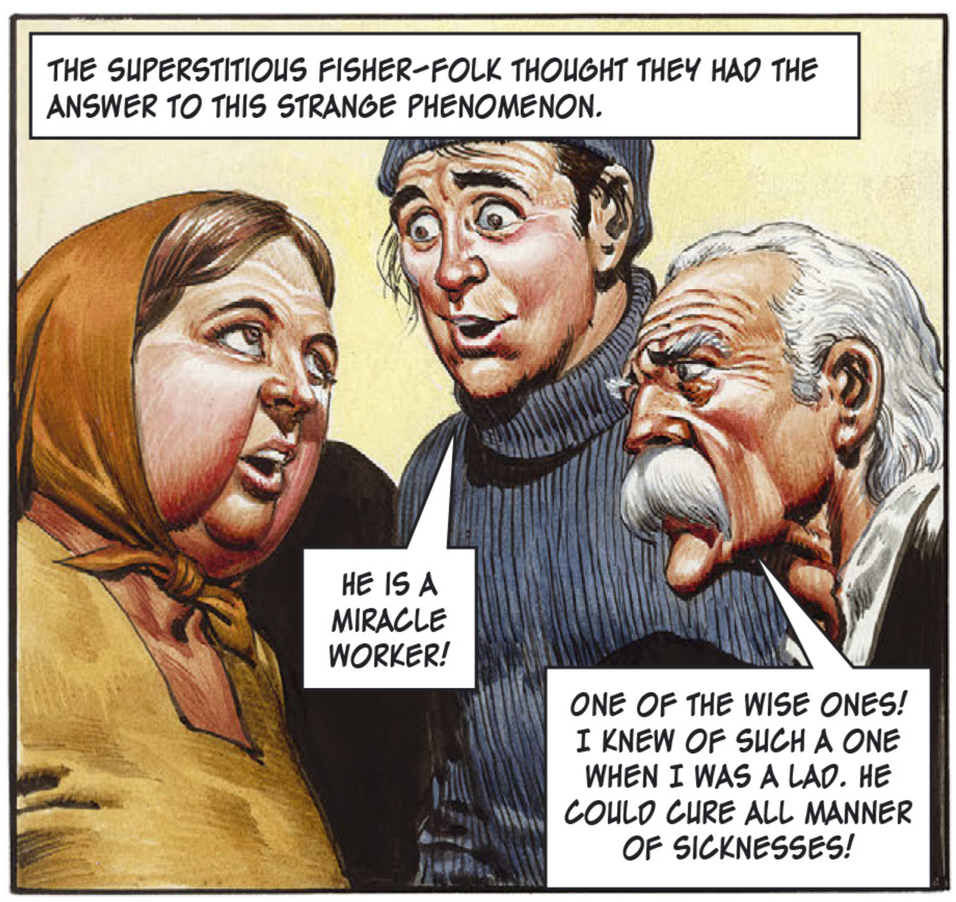
OTHERS CAME RUNNING.
DID YOU SEE THAT FELLOW BEING STRUCK BY LIGHTNING.
YES! HE WAS OVER THERE BY THE END OF THE QUAY.

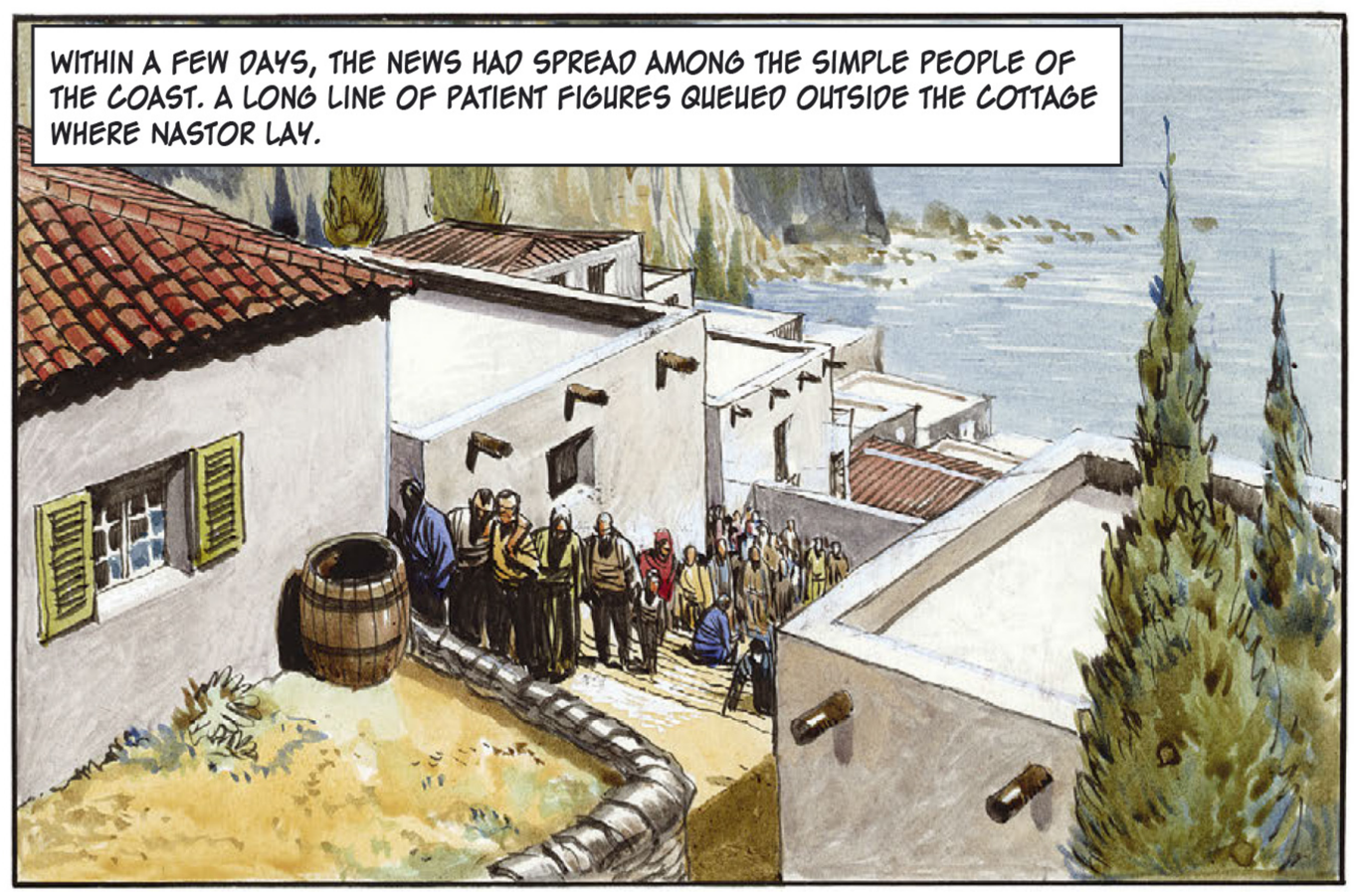
HE'S GONE... DISAPPEARED!


NEXT MORNING, JUST AFTER ELEKTON'S TWIN SUNS HAD RISEN, A FISHERMAN SAW SOMETHING... SOMEONE LYING IN THE SURF.
BY ALL THE STARS.
AAAAAAHHH... AHH...

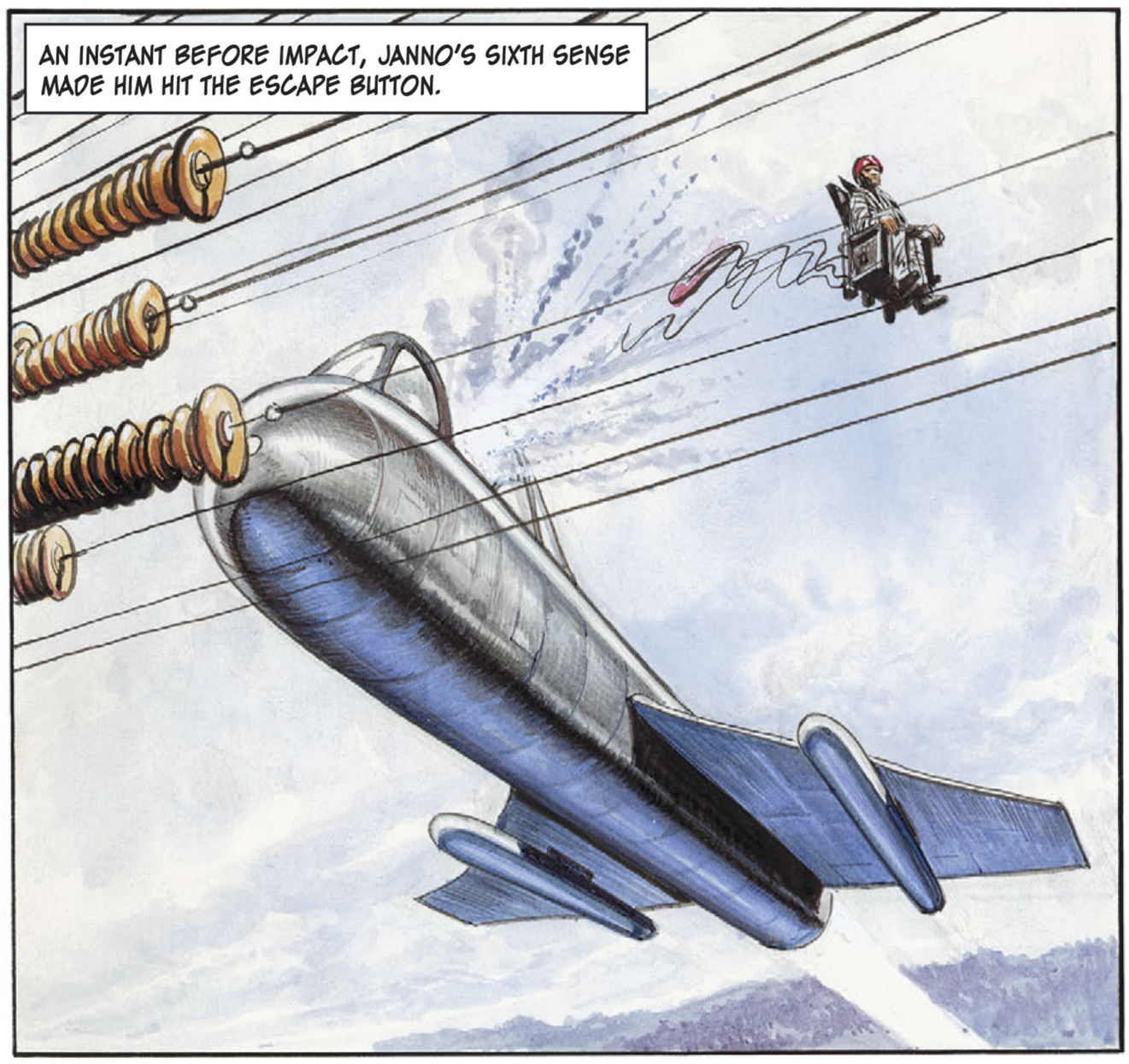
DON LAWRENCE.







TOUCH MY SON AND MAKE HIM WELL AGAIN, SIR. I BEG OF YOU.
I FEEL BETTER ALREADY, SIR.
I'M PLEASED TO HEAR IT.
ALL THE PEOPLE ASKED OF NASTOR WAS THE TOUCH OF HIS HAND OR A FEW WORDS OF COMFORT. THEN THEY DEPARTED HAPPILY LEAVING BEHIND A FEW COINS OR SOME FOOD.
THE SIMPLE FOLK WOULD HAVE BEEN SURPRISED TO KNOW THE THOUGHTS THAT WERE PASSING THROUGH THE 'WISE ONE'S' MIND...
I DON'T KNOW HOW LONG THESE STUPID FOOLS ARE GOING TO TREAT ME LIKE SOME KIND OF GOD BUT I'LL STAY HERE UNTIL I GET MY STRENGTH BACK AND AT THE SAME TIME MAKE SOME MONEY ON THE SIDE.
MEANWHILE, IN TRIGAN CITY AIR FLEET BASE, JANNO WAS MAKING ONE LAST DEPERATE BID TO CONTINUE HIS CAREER AS A PILOT.
JANNO, YOU'RE IN NO FIT STATE TO FLY WITH THOSE BLINDING HEADACHES. WHY NOT TAKE A YEAR'S LEAVE AND GET FIT AGAIN?
I'M BETTER, I TELL YOU, KEREN! AND I'LL PROVE IT... TODAY!
JANNO'S PROOF OF HIS FITNESS TO FLY WAS A DEMONSTRATION OF LOW-LEVEL AEROBATICS THAT HAD THE WHOLE BASE STARING IN AWE.
BUT, IN THE COCKPIT...
AAAAAH! MY HEAD! THE AGONY!
BLINDED BY THE PAIN, JANNO NEVER SAW HIS PERIL...
HE'S GOING TO CRASH INTO THE HIGH-TENSION WIRES!

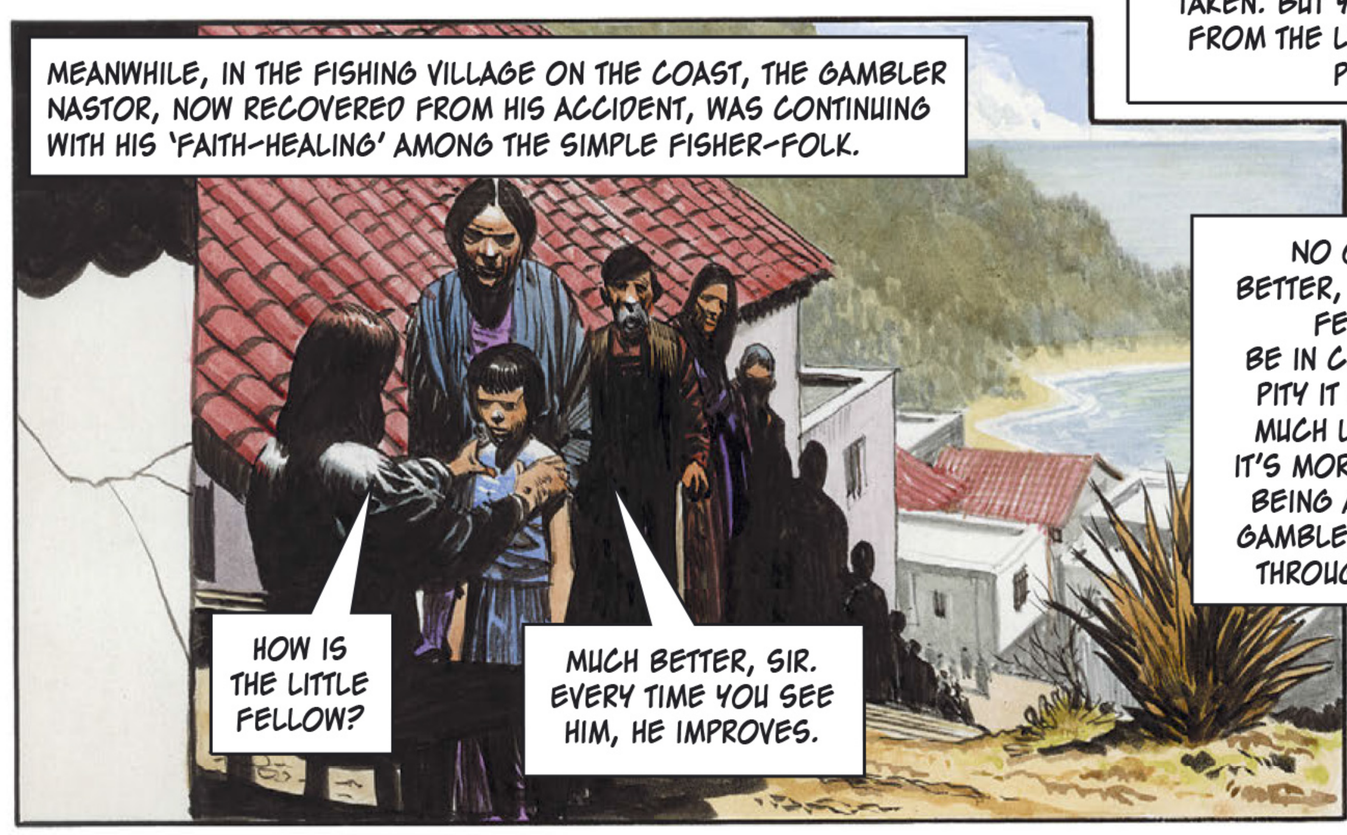

AN INSTANT BEFORE IMPACT, JANNO'S SIXTH SENSE MADE HIM HIT THE ESCAPE BUTTON.

SECONDS LATER, THE HIGH-TENSION WIRES BLEW THE PLANE TO PIECES.

THE RESULT WAS INEVITABLE – A COURT MARTIAL.
YOU ARE INDICTED ON TWO COUNTS. FIRSTLY, YOU DID FLY DANGEROUSLY AND WITHOUT DUE CAUTION. SECONDLY, YOU DID FLY WHILE KNOWING YOURSELF TO ME MEDICALLY UNFIT. HOW DO YOU PLEAD TO THESE TWO CHARGES.
GUILTY TO BOTH, SIR.

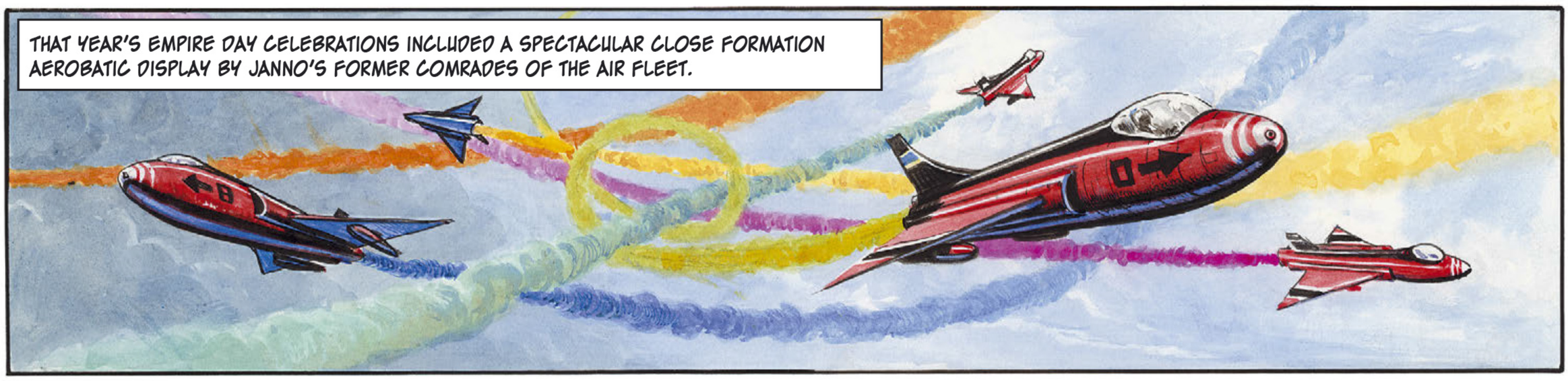
IN VIEW OF YOUR EXCELLENT RECORD, NO FURTHER DISCIPLINARY ACTION WILL BE TAKEN. BUT YOU ARE REMOVED FROM THE LIST OF AIR FLEET PILOTS.

NEVER TO FLY AGAIN... NEVER! WHAT AM I GOING TO DO?


MEANWHILE, IN THE FISHING VILLAGE ON THE COAST, THE GAMBLER NASTOR, NOW RECOVERED FROM HIS ACCIDENT, WAS CONTINUING WITH HIS 'FAITH-HEALING' AMONG THE SIMPLE FISHER-FOLK.
HOW IS THE LITTLE FELLOW?
MUCH BETTER, SIR. EVERY TIME YOU SEE HIM, HE IMPROVES.

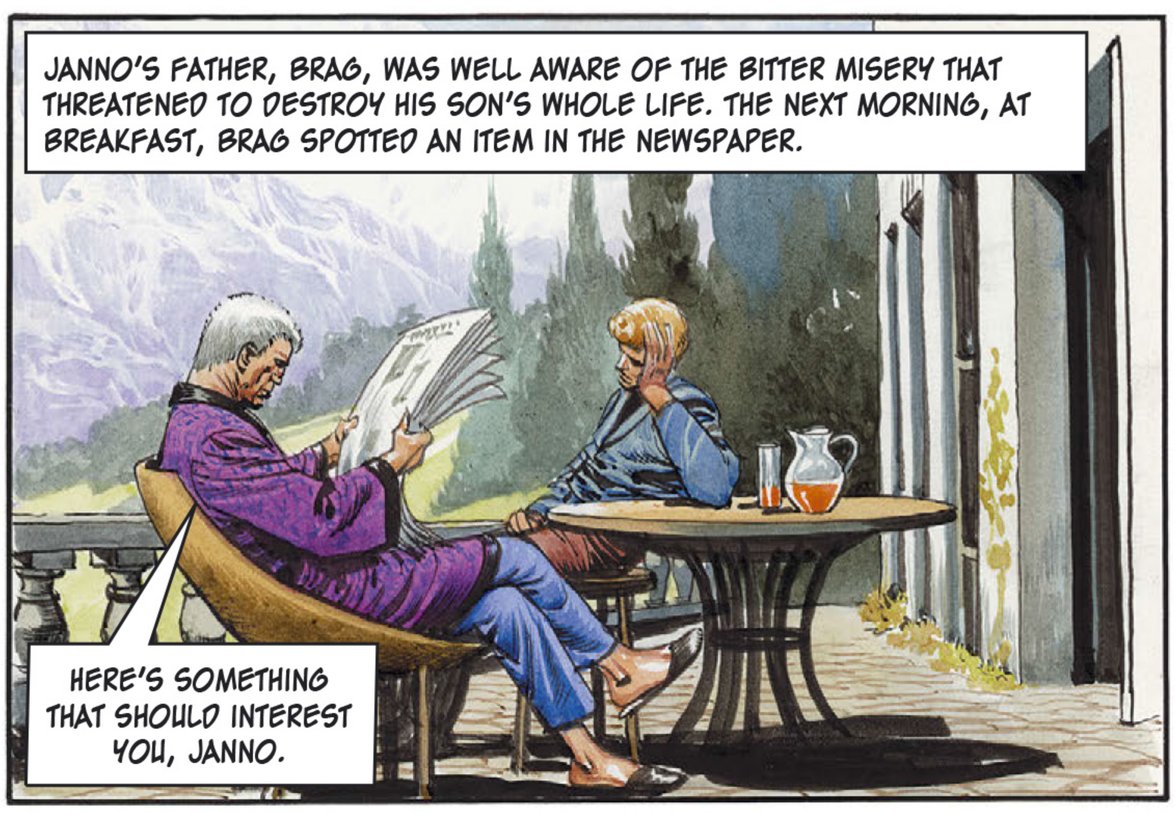
ALONE, NASTOR WAS QUITE FRANK WITH HIMSELF.
NO ONE EVER GETS BETTER, BUT IT MAKES THEM FEEL BETTER TO BE IN CONTACT WITH ME. A PITY IT CAN'T GO ON FOR MUCH LONGER, BECAUSE IT'S MORE PROFITABLE THAN BEING AN UNSUCCESSFUL GAMBLER, BUT THEY'LL SEE THROUGH ME IN THE END.

HE TESTED AGAIN THE STRANGE POWER THAT HAD FOLLOWED HIS BEING STRUCK BY LIGHTNING.
BUT THE WAY I CAN ATTRACT METALS AS IF BY MAGNETISM... THAT'S GENUINE ENOUGH!
ONE DAY, NASTOR CHANCED UPON A VAGABOND AND IMMEDIATELY AN IDEA SPRANG INTO HIS MIND.
SEE HERE, FELLOW. DO YOU WANT TO EARN YOURSELF A FEW ZERSTS?
CERTAINLY, GOOD SIR. PROVIDED I DON'T HAVE TO WORK FOR IT. WORKING'S AGAINST MY CONSCIENCE, YOU SEE.
THAT EVENING, WHEN NASTOR RECEIVED HIS 'PATIENTS', THE VAGABOND LIMPED FORWARD ON CRUTCHES.
I'VE BEEN CRIPPLED SINCE BIRTH, SIR, AND THEY SAY YOU CAN CURE ME.
WE'LL DO WHAT WE CAN, FRIEND.
HE LAID HIS HAND ON THE VAGABOND'S SHOULDER
DID WE SAY TEN ZERSTS OR TWENTY?
WE SAID TEN.
I'VE CHANGED MY MIND. IT'S WORTH TWENTY!
INDEED, NASTOR GOT TWENTY ZERSTS' WORTH OF EXCELLENT ACTING.
I CAN WALK! I'M CURED ... CURED!
THERE WERE TOURISTS PRESENT IN THE VILLAGE THAT DAY. ONE OF THEM – A TRIGAN CITY NEWSPAPERMAN ON HOLIDAY – MADE A VISUAL RECORD OF THE EVENT.
I'LL GET A PICTURE OF THIS. WE COULD USE IT IN THE PAPER.


THAT YEAR'S EMPIRE DAY CELEBRATIONS INCLUDED A SPECTACULAR CLOSE FORMATION AEROBATIC DISPLAY BY JANNO'S FORMER COMRADES OF THE AIR FLEET.

AS THEY FLASHED OVER THE CROWD...

... JANNO WATCHED FROM HIS PLACE IN THE IMPERIAL BOX.
A SPLENDID DISPLAY. WHO'S THE FORMATION LEADER?
KEREN.
IT COULD HAVE BEEN ME.

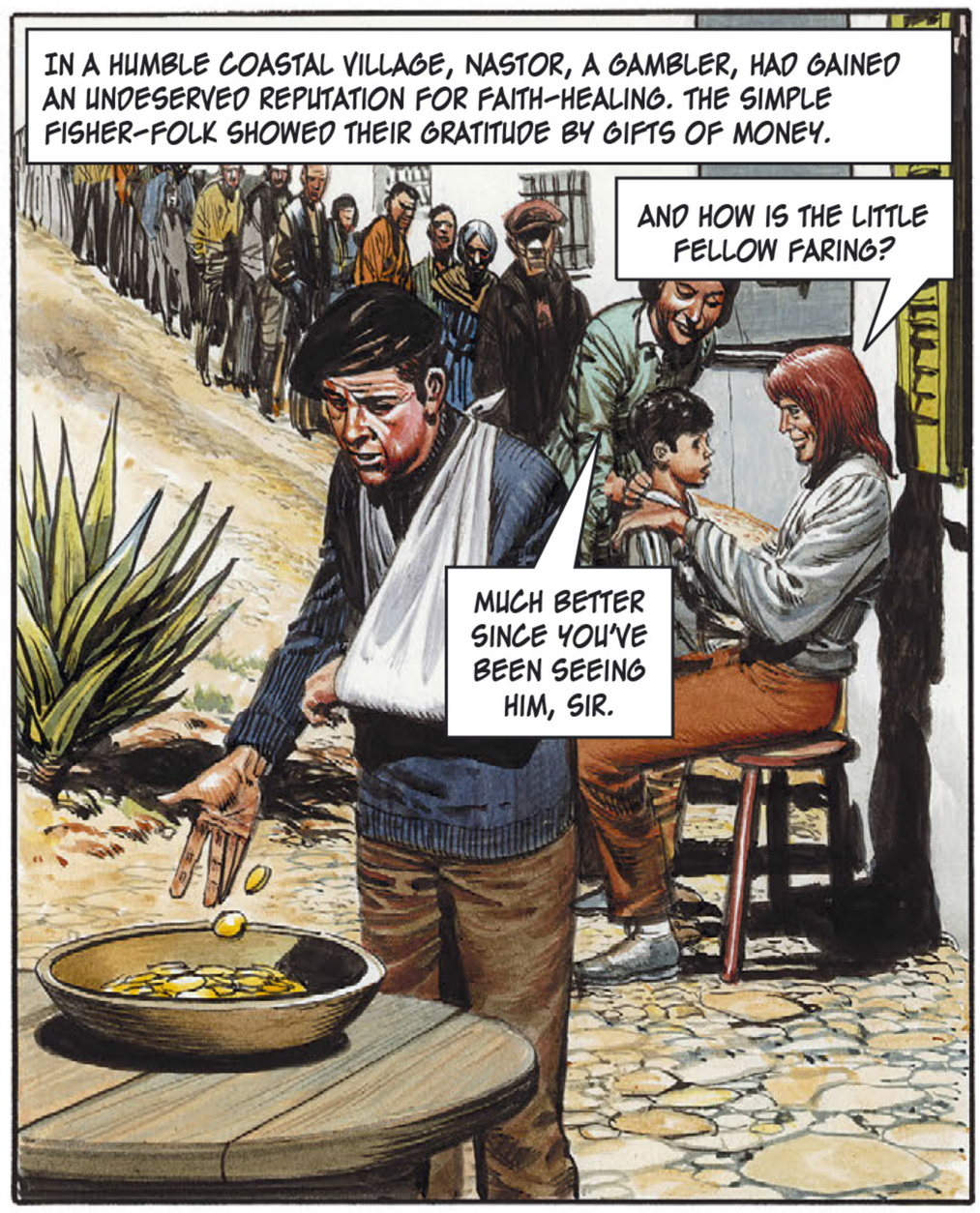

JANNO'S FATHER, BRAG, WAS WELL AWARE OF THE BITTER MISERY THAT THREATENED TO DESTROY HIS SON'S WHOLE LIFE. THE NEXT MORNING, AT BREAKFAST, BRAG SPOTTED AN ITEM IN THE NEWSPAPER.
HERE'S SOMETHING THAT SHOULD INTEREST YOU, JANNO.

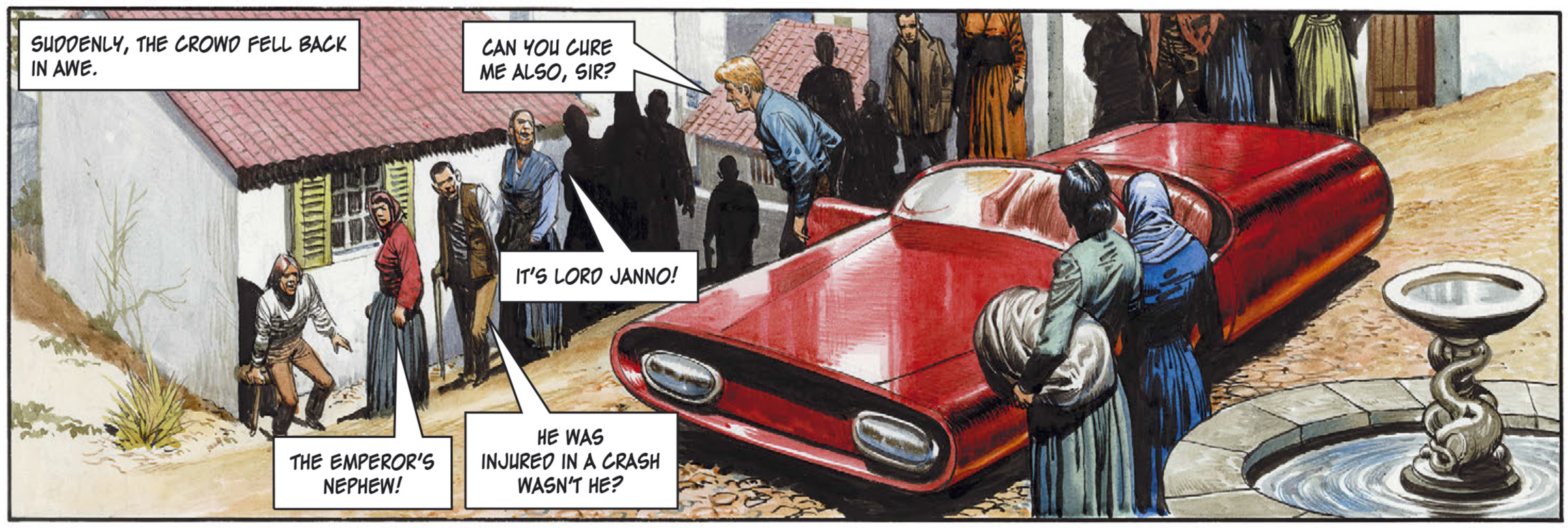
THE PICTURE AND THE NEWS ITEM TOLD OF A MIRACLE-WORKING HEALER WHO HAD SEEMINGLY CURED A LIFELONG CRIPPLE.

IT'S OBVIOUSLY A HOAX. THESE FELLOWS CROP UP FROM TIME TO TIME. THEY CHEAT A FEW SIMPLE-MINDED FOLK OUT OF THEIR HARD-EARNED MONEY AND THEN DISAPPEAR.
ON THE VORG SEA COAST... LIVING IN A FISHERMAN'S COTTAGE...

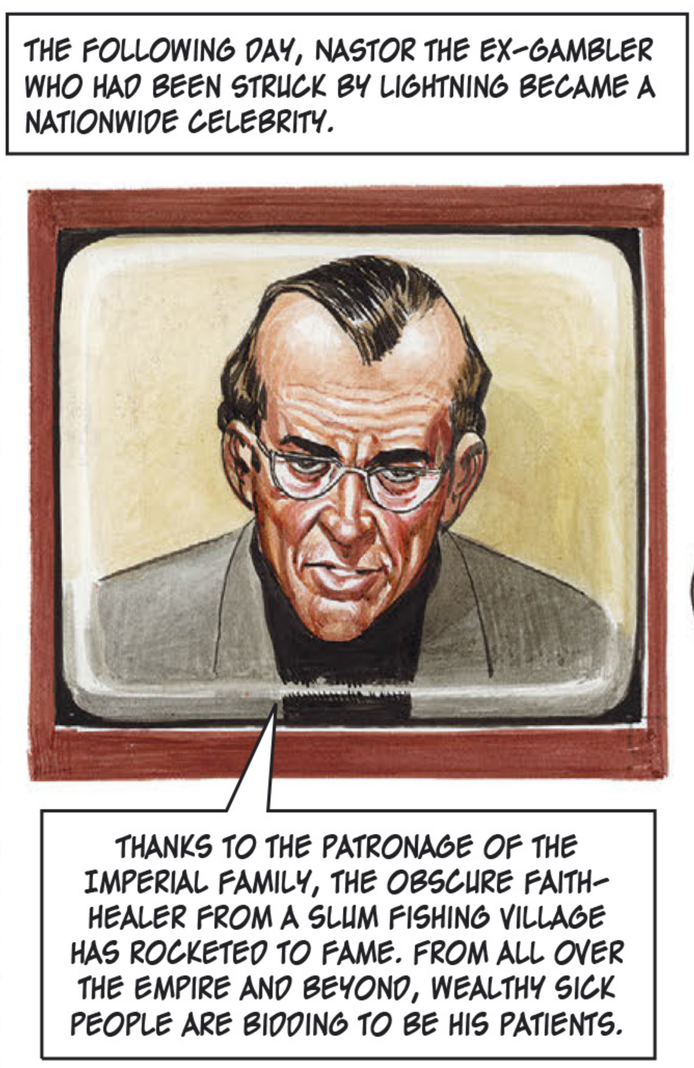
I'LL HAVE SOME ENQUIRIES MADE ABOUT THIS FELLOW. HEY! WHERE ARE YOU GOING, JANNO?

IN NO TIME, JANNO WAS DRIVING AT FULL SPEED FOR THE VORG SEA COAST.
A CHANCE TO BE CURED! TO BE ABLE TO FLY AGAIN! I'M GOING TO GRAB AT IT WITH BOTH HANDS!


IN A HUMBLE COASTAL VILLAGE, NASTOR, A GAMBLER, HAD GAINED AN UNDESERVED REPUTATION FOR FAITH-HEALING. THE SIMPLE FISHER-FOLK SHOWED THEIR GRATITUDE BY GIFTS OF MONEY.
AND HOW IS THE LITTLE FELLOW FARING?
MUCH BETTER SINCE YOU'VE BEEN SEEING HIM, SIR.


SUDDENLY, THE CROWD FELL BACK IN AWE.
CAN YOU CURE ME ALSO, SIR?
IT'S LORD JANNO!
THE EMPEROR'S NEPHEW!
HE WAS INJURED IN A CRASH WASN'T HE?

WELL, CAN YOU CURE ME?
I CAN TRY, MY SON.


THE FOLLOWING DAY, NASTOR THE EX-GAMBLER WHO HAD BEEN STRUCK BY LIGHTNING BECAME A NATIONWIDE CELEBRITY.
THANKS TO THE PATRONAGE OF THE IMPERIAL FAMILY, THE OBSCURE FAITH-HEALER FROM A SLUM FISHING VILLAGE HAS ROCKETED TO FAME. FROM ALL OVER THE EMPIRE AND BEYOND, WEALTHY SICK PEOPLE ARE BIDDING TO BE HIS PATIENTS.

NASTOR REJOICED.
I'VE MADE IT! FAME AND RICHES AT LAST!

A LIGHT SPORTS CRAFT FLEW TO WHAT SEEMED LIKE CERTAIN DESTRUCTION.

THE WING SPAN WAS ONLY A HAIRS BEADTH NARROWER THAN THE WIDTH OF THE BRIDGE BUT THE PILOT MADE IT.

HOW WAS THAT?

MAGNIFICENT!

LATER, WHEN THEY HAD LANDED IN TRIGAN CITY.

HERE'S YOUR FIFTY ZERSTS.

I DON'T UNDERSTAND YOU, LORD JANNO. WHY PAY GOOD MONEY TO RISK YOUR NECK – AND MINE – IN WILD STUNTS LIKE THAT?

JANNO'S VOICE WAS BITTER AND REGRETFUL.

I'M SORRY FOR YOU, LORD JANNO, AND THAT'S THE TRUTH.

I'M ONLY ALIVE WHEN I FEEL THE THRILL AND THE FEAR OF DANGER. I CAN NO LONGER PILOT, SO I HAVE TO DO MY LIVING SECOND HAND.

JANNO DROVE TO A SUMPTUOUS VILLA OUTSIDE THE CITY.

I HAVE COME FOR MY APPOINTMENT WITH NASTOR.

THE WISE ONE WILL SEE YOU NOW, LORD JANNO.

NASTOR'S NEW RECEPTION ROOM WAS A FAR CRY FROM THE FISHERMAN'S HOVEL WHERE HE HAD LATELY PLIED HIS STRANGE TRADE.

AND HOW ARE THE HEADACHES, MY SON?

DO YOU KNOW, NASTOR, I REALLY THINK THEY ARE NOT SO FREQUENT NOR SO PAINFUL.

TALK YOURSELF INTO FEELING BETTER BY ALL MEANS, YOU STUPID FELLOW! THANKS TO YOU, THE RICHEST PEOPLE ON THE PLANET ARE FALLING OVER THEMSELVES TO BECOME MY PATIENTS!
YOU MUST BE DOING ME GOOD.
THERE WAS ANOTHER CALLER AT THE 'HEALER'S' VILLA. A HUMBLE FISHWIFE AND HER CHILD.
BUT THE WISE ONE MUST SEE MY LITTLE BOY. HE'S DONE HIM SO MUCH GOOD ALREADY!
THOSE DAYS ARE OVER, WOMAN. GET YOU GONE. YOU CAN'T AFFORD THE WISE ONE'S SERVICES ANY MORE.
THERE HAD BEEN A WITNESS TO THE INCIDENT. THE GREAT SCIENTIST PERIC, WHO HAD CALLED TO SEE NASTOR FOR REASONS OF HIS OWN.
WAIT, PLEASE, MY GOOD WOMAN. YOU SAY THAT NASTOR HAS ALREADY BENEFITTED YOUR CHILD?
YES, SIR. AND MANY OTHERS DOWN IN THE FISHING VILLAGE.
LATER THAT DAY, NASTOR HAD MORE VISITORS.
KEEP WATCH UNTIL I YELL FOR YOU. IF ANYONE TRIES TO COME IN, BEND THEM SLIGHTLY!
THAT FELLOW MUST BE A CHEAT AND A MOUNTEBANK. HE'S TAKING ADVANTAGE OF JANNO'S HIGH RANK TO HELP HIM TO BECOME RICH. I MUST MAKE ENQUIRIES.
THE EX-GAMBLER GREETED THE NEWCOMER WITH SOME UNEASE.
NICE PLACE YOU'VE GOT HERE, NASTOR. YOU MUST BE MAKING A FORTUNE.
HAVEN'T I SEEN YOU SOMEWHERE BEFORE?
IN NASTOR'S FORMER LIFE ON THE EDGE OF THE UNDERWORLD, HE HAD COME ACROSS MANY UNSAVOURY CHARACTERS.
I KNOW WHO YOU ARE. YOU'RE ZUDD, THE GANGSTER!
LET'S TALK BUSINESS, NASTOR. FROM NOW ON, I'M YOUR MANAGER AND YOU PAY ME SEVENTY-FIVE PERCENT OF YOUR EARNINGS FROM THIS RACKET! I'LL BRING IN THE BOYS TO SHOW THAT WE MEAN BUSINESS!

THE RICHLY APPOINTED RECEPTION ROOM WAS FILLED WITH A ROAR OF DEVASTATING SOUND.
WHEN IT WAS ALL OVER, ZUDD STATED HIS TERMS.
IT BREAKS MY HEART TO HAVE TO DO THIS TO YOU, NASTOR, BUT I'M GOING TO HAVE TO INCREASE MY PERCENTAGE OF YOUR PROFITS FROM SEVENTY-FIVE TO NINETY PER CENT. I'LL CALL AROUND FOR THE FIRST PAYMENT NEXT WEEK.
MEANWHILE, THE GREAT SCIENTIST PERIC WAS CARRYING OUT HIS PRIVATE ENQUIRIES INTO THE PAST CAREER OF NASTOR THE 'HEALER'.
YOU SAY THAT THE CHILD USED TO SUFFER FROM HEADACHES BUT THAT THEY HAVE LESSENED SINCE NASTOR ATTENDED HIM?
I KEEP TELLING YOU THAT. DON'T YOU BELIEVE ME?
LATER, PERIC STALKED UNANNOUNCED INTO NASTOR'S HOME.
WHO ARE YOU?
I AM PERIC THE SCIENTIST AND I HAVE A NOTION THAT YOU ARE ONE OF THE BIGGEST SCOUNDRELS ALIVE!
HOWEVER, THERE IS JUST AN OUTSIDE CHANCE THAT YOU MIGHT BE GENUINE. I AM TOLD THAT YOU CAN ATTRACT METALS LIKE A MAGNET. SHOW ME!
Y- YES!
THE DEMONSTRATION TOOK PLACE.
THERE!
ALLOWING FOR THE FACT THAT A TENTH-RATE ILLUSIONIST COULD PERFORM SUCH A FEAT ON THE STAGE, EVEN ALLOWING FOR THAT, I AM IMPRESSED.
I BECAME INTERESTED IN YOU, MY FRIEND, WHEN I LEARNED THAT YOU HAD BEEN TAMPERING WITH JANNO'S BRAIN. JANNO IS A FRIEND OF MINE AND IF YOU HAVE DONE HIM ANY HARM WITH YOUR QUACKERY, I'LL SEE TO IT THAT YOU EKE OUT YOUR DAYS IN THE PUNISHMENT MINES.
ON THEIR ARRIVAL AT JANNO'S FAMILY VILLA.
LORD JANNO HAS GONE TO THE PRIVATE FLYING FIELD. HE STATED THAT HIS HEALTH WAS SO MUCH IMPROVED THAT HE WOULD TRY HIS HAND AT A FEW STUNTS.
QUICK! BACK INTO THE CAR! WE MUST STOP HIM!

AS THEY ARRIVED AT THE FLYING FIELD...

LOOK OUT!

MINUTES LATER, JANNO LANDED AND GRINNED INTO THE SHOCKED FACE OF HIS OLD FRIEND, PERIC.

THAT PUT AT LEAST TEN LUNAR YEARS ON MY LIFE, SO THERE'S NO TELLING WHAT IT DID TO YOU. WE'RE GOING TO SETTLE THIS FAITH-HEALING BUSINESS ONCE AND FOR ALL. BOTH OF YOU ARE COMING BACK TO MY LABORATORY FOR EXTENSIVE TESTS.

FOR THE REST OF THAT DAY, PERIC SUBJECTED BOTH JANNO AND NASTOR TO THE MOST RIGOROUS SCIENTIFIC ANALYSES AND, AT THE END OF IT...

WHAT'S YOUR VERDICT?

FAITH-HEALING OR NO FAITH-HEALING, YOU'RE CURED! YOU CAN GO BACK TO THE AIR FLEET TOMORROW.

YOU MEAN...?

NO, YOU HAVEN'T WORKED A MIRACLE! THERE IS A SCIENTIFIC EXPLANATION FOR THE POWERS THAT HAVE COME TO YOU AS A RESULT OF BEING STRUCK BY LIGHTNING.

IN LAYMAN'S TERMS, YOUR BODY ELECTRICITY HAS INCREASED TO A DEGREE WHERE YOU ARE ABLE TO ALTER OTHER PEOPLE'S ELECTRICAL IMPULSES. IN CASES WHERE THEIR BRAIN PATTERNS HAVE BEEN DISTURBED BY INJURY AS IN JANNO'S CASE – YOU CAN DO A GREAT DEAL OF GOOD.

IT'S A GREAT GIFT, NASTOR. YOU MUST USE IT WELL.

I WANTED TO MAKE A FORTUNE. I MADE A FORTUNE – BUT IT BROUGHT ME NOTHING BUT TROUBLE!

IF YOU'RE WORRYING ABOUT THE ZUDD GANG, PUT YOUR MIND AT REST. PERIC TELLS ME HE'S PUT THE TRIGAN POLICE ON TO THEM.

THERE ARE BOUND TO BE OTHER UNSCRUPULOUS PEOPLE WHO WOULD TRY TO EXPLOIT ME AND MY GREAT GIFT. THERE'S ONLY ONE THING FOR IT – I PROMISE TO GIVE MY SERVICES FREE TO THE PEOPLE WHO NEED IT MOST AND I WILL KEEP THAT PROMISE.

LVI

THE TRIGAN EMPIRE

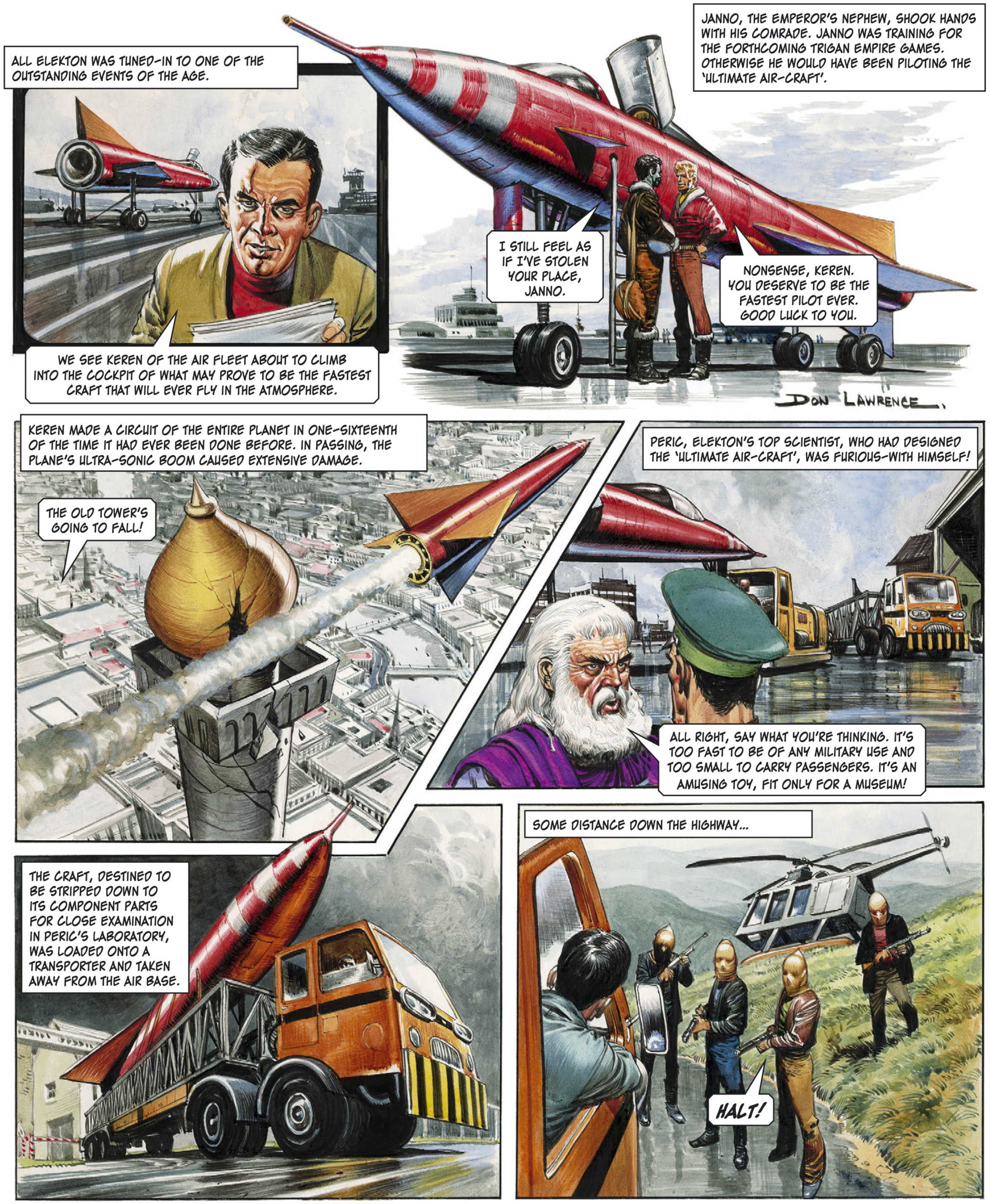
THE ULTIMATE COLLECTION

Originally published in ***Look and Learn*** 724 - 731

29th November 1975 – 17th January 1976

Story by Mike Butterworth

Art by Don Lawrence

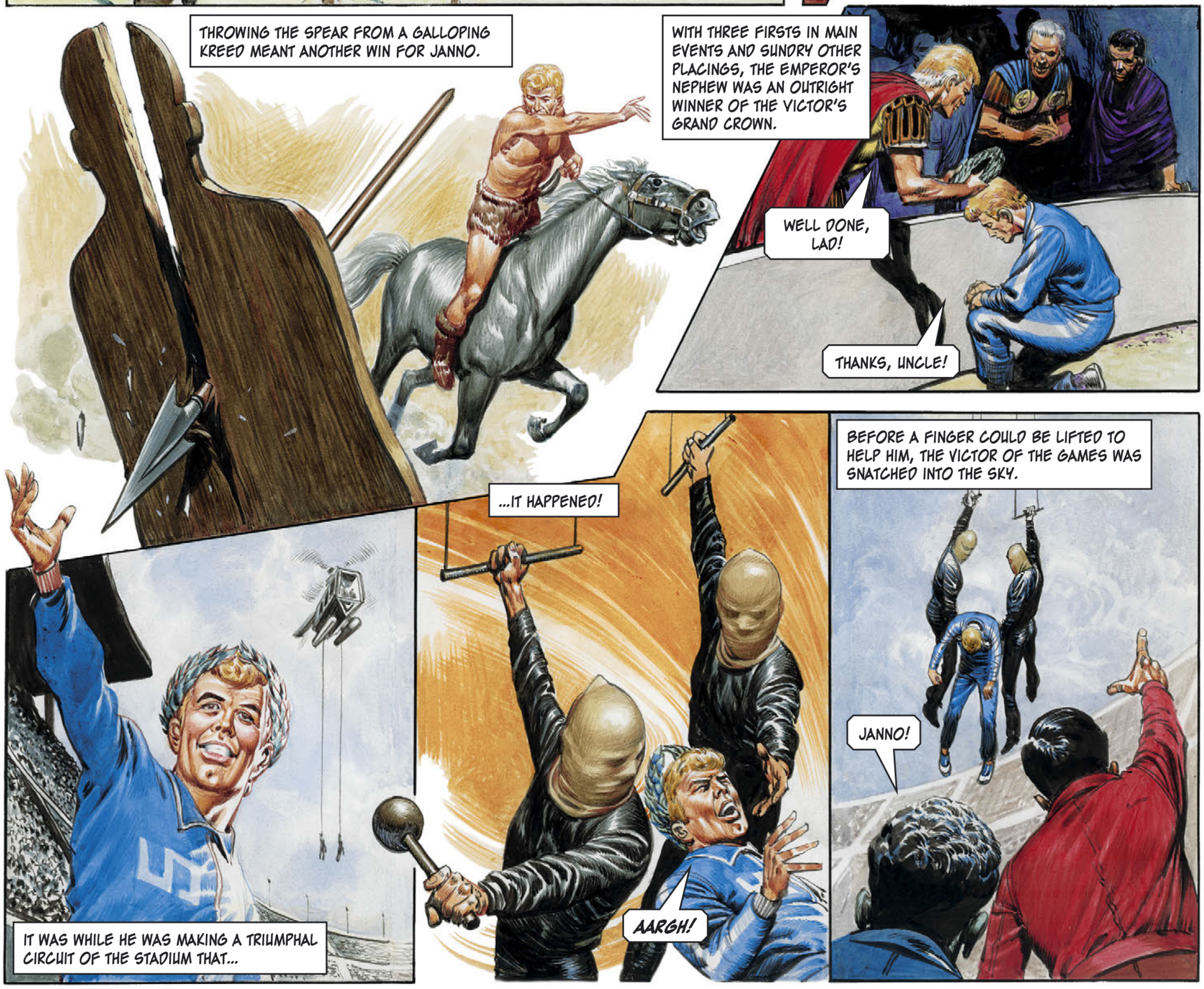

ALL ELEKTON WAS TUNED-IN TO ONE OF THE OUTSTANDING EVENTS OF THE AGE.
WE SEE KEREN OF THE AIR FLEET ABOUT TO CLIMB INTO THE COCKPIT OF WHAT MAY PROVE TO BE THE FASTEST CRAFT THAT WILL EVER FLY IN THE ATMOSPHERE.
JANNO, THE EMPEROR'S NEPHEW, SHOOK HANDS WITH HIS COMRADE. JANNO WAS TRAINING FOR THE FORTHCOMING TRIGAN EMPIRE GAMES. OTHERWISE HE WOULD HAVE BEEN PILOTING THE 'ULTIMATE AIR-CRAFT'.
I STILL FEEL AS IF I'VE STOLEN YOUR PLACE, JANNO.
NONSENSE, KEREN. YOU DESERVE TO BE THE FASTEST PILOT EVER. GOOD LUCK TO YOU.
DON LAWRENCE
KEREN MADE A CIRCUIT OF THE ENTIRE PLANET IN ONE-SIXTEENTH OF THE TIME IT HAD EVER BEEN DONE BEFORE. IN PASSING, THE PLANE'S ULTRA-SONIC BOOM CAUSED EXTENSIVE DAMAGE.
THE OLD TOWER'S GOING TO FALL!
PERIC, ELEKTON'S TOP SCIENTIST, WHO HAD DESIGNED THE 'ULTIMATE AIR-CRAFT', WAS FURIOUS-WITH HIMSELF!
ALL RIGHT, SAY WHAT YOU'RE THINKING. IT'S TOO FAST TO BE OF ANY MILITARY USE AND TOO SMALL TO CARRY PASSENGERS. IT'S AN AMUSING TOY, FIT ONLY FOR A MUSEUM!
THE CRAFT, DESTINED TO BE STRIPPED DOWN TO ITS COMPONENT PARTS FOR CLOSE EXAMINATION IN PERIC'S LABORATORY, WAS LOADED ONTO A TRANSPORTER AND TAKEN AWAY FROM THE AIR BASE.
SOME DISTANCE DOWN THE HIGHWAY...
HALT!

THE UNARMED CREW OF THE TRANSPORTER LOOKED ON WHILE THE 'ULTIMATE AIR-CRAFT' WAS ATTACHED TO THE HELI-JET AND CARRIED SKYWARDS.
THE SNATCHING OF THE WONDER-PLANE WAS A SENSATION THROUGHOUT ELEKTON AT FIRST. BUT, AS THE LUNAR MONTHS WENT BY, ANOTHER SENSATION CLAIMED THE ATTENTION OF THE MASSES.
'THE MONSTER OF VORG' WAS EXHIBITED IN A SPECIALLY CONSTRUCTED BUILDING IN TRIGAN CITY. IT BECAME ONE OF THE SIGHTS OF THE PLANET.
HERE, ON THIS SITE IN THE WILDERNESS OF VORG, HAS BEEN UNCOVERED THE FOSSILISED REMAINS OF THE EARLIEST FOUR-LEGGED CREATURE TO INHABIT OUR PLANET... THE MONSTER OF VORG!
SEVERAL WEEKS LATER, FROM OUT OF A PEACEFUL SKY, A FORCE OF ARMED WARRIORS DESCENDED.
ACTING SWIFTLY AND RUTHLESSLY DEALING WITH THE SLIGHTEST OPPOSITION, THEY CLEARED VISITORS FROM THE VAST BUILDING THAT HOUSED THE MONSTER.
AAAAGH!
EXPLOSIVE CHARGES BROUGHT THE TRANSPARENT ROOF CRASHING DOWN.
THEN, FROM OUT OF THE WRECKAGE ROSE 'THE MONSTER OF VORG'!

ALL TRIGAN CITY TURNED OUT TO SEE THE FOSSILISED MONSTER BEING CARRIED OFF.
THEY'VE GOT THE MONSTER OF VORG!
THE AIR FLEET DEFENCES OF THE CITY WERE HASTILY SENT UP.
HEAD FOR AREA THREE-FIVE-ONE. INTERCEPT-BUT DO NOT OPEN FIRE! UNDERSTOOD?
ORDER RECEIVED AND UNDERSTOOD.
LATER...
LEADER OF THE INTERCEPTORS REPORTS THEY'VE LOST CONTACT, SIR.
WITH A THING THAT SIZE? IMPOSSIBLE!
WHEN IT WAS ALL OVER, THE EXPERTS WENT THROUGH THE OPERATION IN DETAIL AND CAME UP WITH A SURPRISING CONCLUSION.
THE THIEVES, WHOEVER THEY ARE, MADE THEIR ESCAPE IN THIS DIRECTION. SHORTLY BEFORE PASSING THE BOUNDARY OF GREATER TRIGAN CITY, THEY DISAPPEARED FROM SIGHT. SO WE ESTIMATE THAT THE MONSTER OF VORG IS STILL SOMEWHERE NEAR AT HAND!
SPECULATION ABOUT THE MISSING GIANT FOSSIL WAS ON EVERYONE'S LIPS FOR A FEW DAYS. THE INCIDENT WAS THEN COMPLETELY OVERSHADOWED BY THE TRIGAN EMPIRE GAMES!
PEOPLE OF THE PLANET ELEKTON... WE PROUDLY PRESENT THE TWENTIETH TRIGAN EMPIRE GAMES!
A STAR ATHLETE AND STRONG CONTENDER FOR THE VICTOR'S GRAND CROWN WAS JANNO, THE EMPEROR'S NEPHEW.
COMPETITORS FOR THE POLE-CLIMBING TAKE YOUR PLACES.
GOOD LUCK, JANNO.

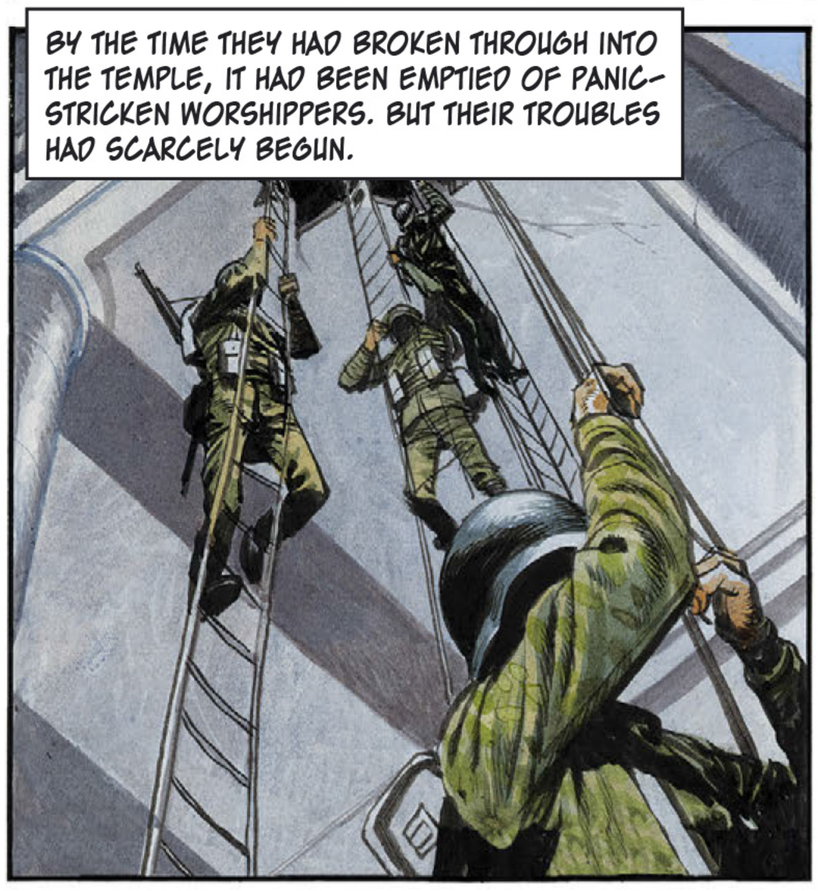
POLE-CLIMBING-THE MOST PHYSICALLY DEMANDING AND DANGEROUS OF ALL ELEKTON ATHLETIC EVENTS... AND JANNO WAS THE FIRST TO PLANT HIS FLAG!

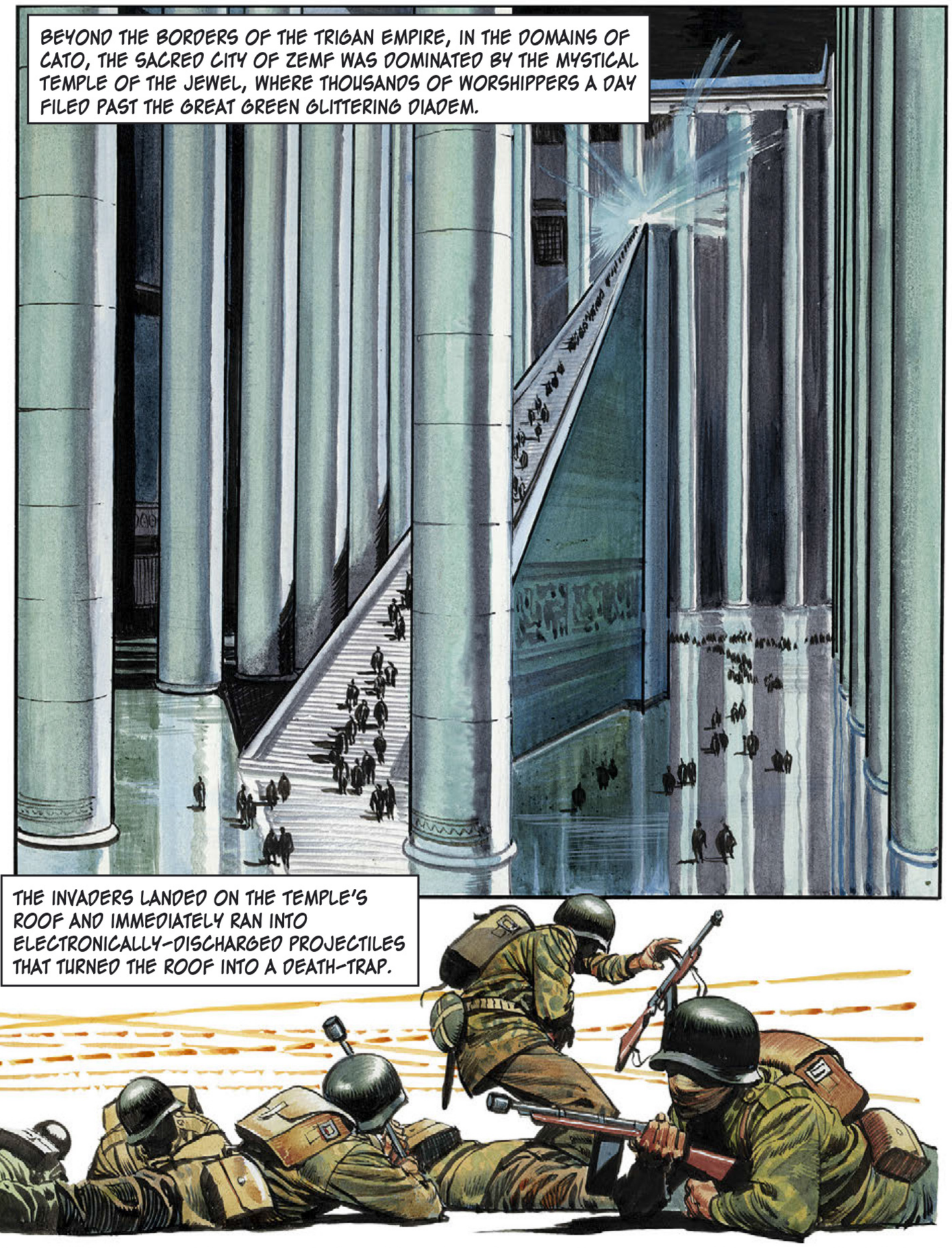
THEN FOLLOWED THE ANCIENT AND TRADITIONAL FIVE-ZARRA FOOT RACE, THE COMPETITORS BEARING ARMOUR AND WEAPONS-WITH JANNO AGAIN THE WINNER.


THROWING THE SPEAR FROM A GALLOPING KREED MEANT ANOTHER WIN FOR JANNO.
WITH THREE FIRSTS IN MAIN EVENTS AND SUNDRY OTHER PLACINGS, THE EMPEROR'S NEPHEW WAS AN OUTRIGHT WINNER OF THE VICTOR'S GRAND CROWN.
WELL DONE, LAD!
THANKS, UNCLE!
IT WAS WHILE HE WAS MAKING A TRIUMPHAL CIRCUIT OF THE STADIUM THAT...
...IT HAPPENED!
AARGH!
BEFORE A FINGER COULD BE LIFTED TO HELP HIM, THE VICTOR OF THE GAMES WAS SNATCHED INTO THE SKY.
JANNO!

NEWS OF THE SNATCHING OF THE EMPEROR'S POPULAR NEPHEW WAS FLASHED ROUND THE PLANET. FOR THE FIRST TIME, THERE WAS A MENTION OF A SINISTER CONNECTION BETWEEN JANNO'S DISAPPEARANCE AND OTHER SENSATIONAL EVENTS.
IN THIS MANNER, LORD JANNO WAS SNATCHED UP INTO THE SKY. IT WILL BE RECALLED THAT THE 'ULTIMATE AIR-CRAFT' AND 'THE MONSTER OF VORG' WERE TAKEN IN THE SAME WAY.

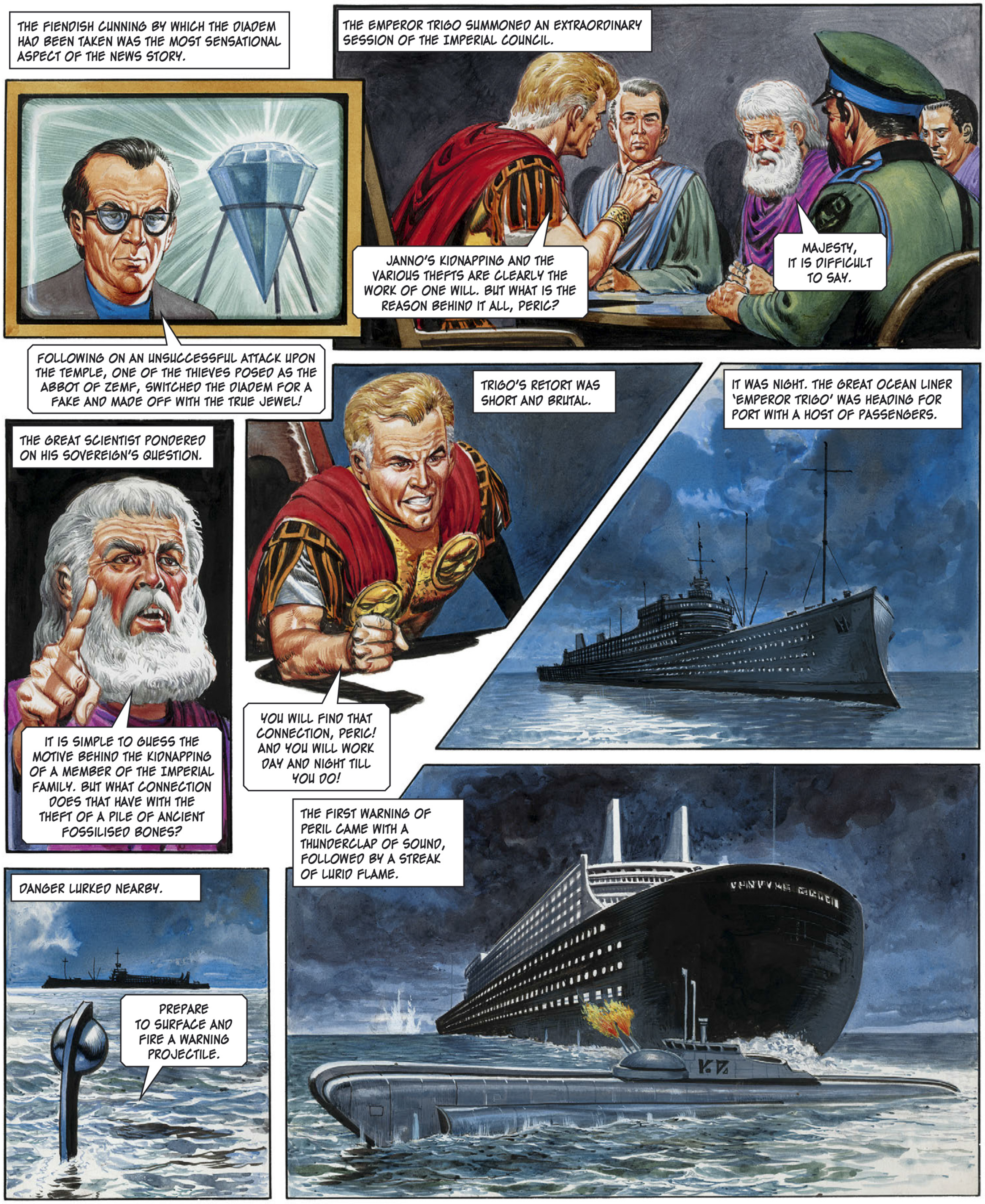
THE DIADEM WAS GUARDED BY THE MOST SOPHISTICATED ELECTRONIC DEVICES. IT WAS RECKONED THAT THE SHEER COMPLEXITY OF THE DEFENCES WERE SUFFICIENT TO DEFEAT ANY INTRUDER. AND THEN ONE DAY, THEY CAME.


BY THE TIME THEY HAD BROKEN THROUGH INTO THE TEMPLE, IT HAD BEEN EMPTIED OF PANIC-STRICKEN WORSHIPPERS. BUT THEIR TROUBLES HAD SCARCELY BEGUN.


BEYOND THE BORDERS OF THE TRIGAN EMPIRE, IN THE DOMAINS OF CATO, THE SACRED CITY OF ZEMF WAS DOMINATED BY THE MYSTICAL TEMPLE OF THE JEWEL, WHERE THOUSANDS OF WORSHIPPERS A DAY FILED PAST THE GREAT GREEN GLITTERING DIADEM.
THE INVADERS LANDED ON THE TEMPLE'S ROOF AND IMMEDIATELY RAN INTO ELECTRONICALLY-DISCHARGED PROJECTILES THAT TURNED THE ROOF INTO A DEATH-TRAP.

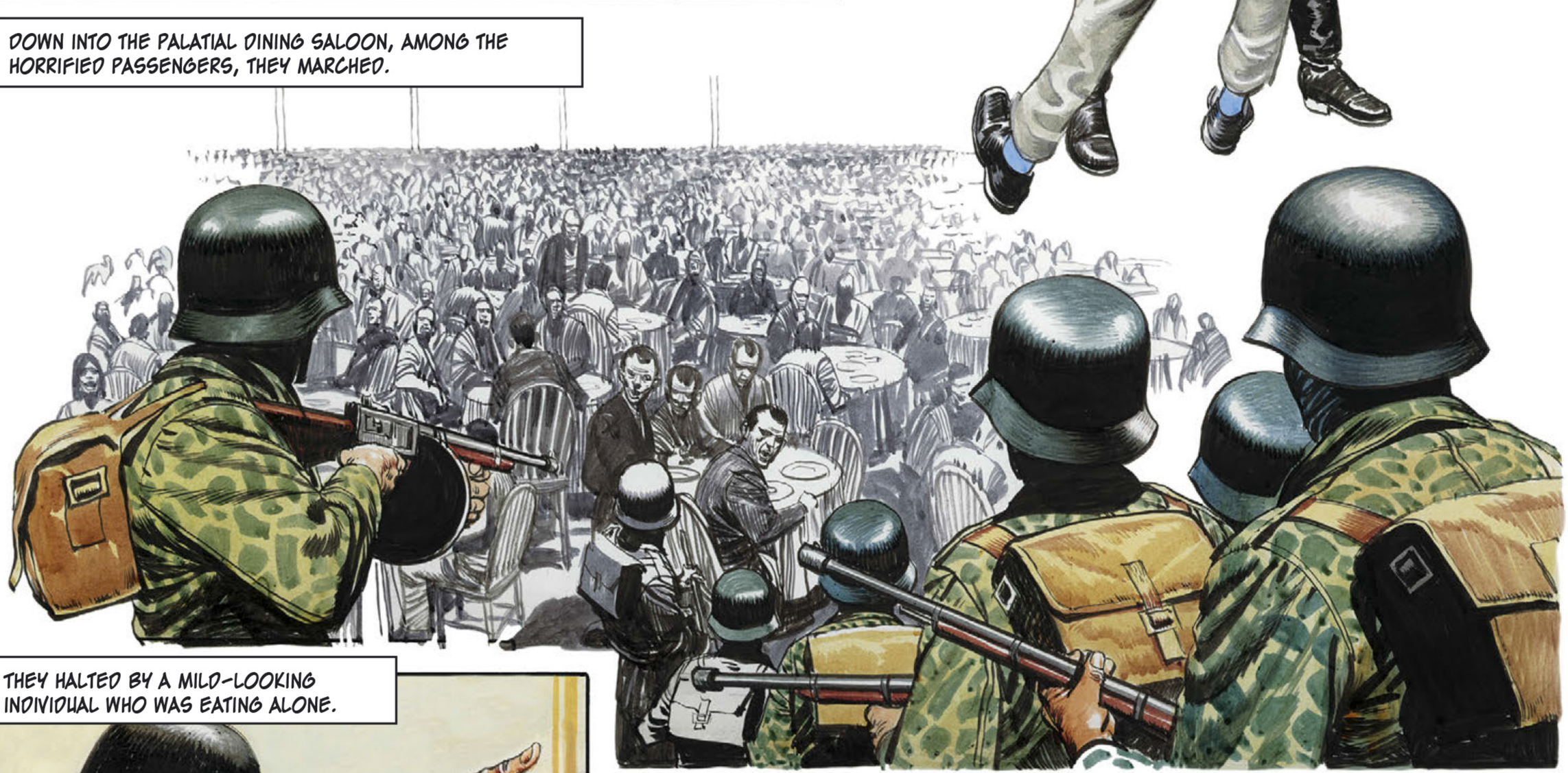
WHEN THEY ATTEMPTED TO MOUNT THE STAIRS TO THE DIADEM, THE STAIRS STRAIGHTENED OUT TO BECOME A SLIPPERY SLIDE!
AAAAAAGHHH!
EEEEEGHHH!

BY THEN, THE WAIL OF POLICE SIRENS OUTSIDE THE BUILDING TOLD THE INTRUDERS THAT A HUE AND CRY HAD BEEN RAISED. THEIR LEADER CAME TO A SWIFT DECISION.
WE HAVE BEEN BEATEN BY TIME! BACK THE WAY WE CAME!
THWARTED BY THE VERY COMPLEXITY OF THE DEFENCES, THE RAIDERS BROKE OFF THE ATTEMPT AND FLEW AWAY.
GUARDIAN AND KEEPER OF THE GREAT GREEN DIADEM WAS THE ABBOT OF ZEMF, WHO DWELT IN A PALACE ON THE MOUNTAIN CREST AND WAS SELDOM SEEN. SOON AFTER THE DEPARTURE OF THE RAIDERS, THE ABBOT ARRIVED AT THE TEMPLE OF THE JEWEL.
THE GREAT GREEN DIADEM IS UNTOUCHED MOST SPLENDID ONE.
ONLY THE ABBOT HIMSELF WAS ALLOWED TO LAY HANDS ON THE SACRED GEM. THIS HE DID IN FULL VIEW OF ALL.
THIS I MUST SEE WITH MY OWN EYES AND WITH MY OWN HANDS I MUST ENSURE MYSELF THAT IT HAS SUFFERED NO HARM.
ALL IS WELL. THE SACRED DIADEM HAS NOT BEEN DEFILED!
LATER THAT DAY, THE RESIDENT HIGH PRIEST OF THE TEMPLE RECEIVED A CALL ON VIDI-PHONE.
THIS IS THE ABBOT'S SECRETARY. HIS EXCELLENCY, THE MOST SPLENDID ONE, WISHES TO COME TO THE TEMPLE AND ASSURE HIMSELF THAT THE DIADEM HAS NOT BEEN DEFILED. PLEASE MAKE ARRANGEMENTS TO RECEIVE...
BUT THE MOST SPLENDID ONE HAS ALREADY BEEN!
WHAT? DO NOTHING AND TOUCH NOTHING UNTIL I AM WITH YOU!
ONE HOUR LATER, THE ABBOT'S SECRETARY WAS INSPECTING THE HUGE GEM.
FOOLS! DOLTS! BUNGLERS! THIS IS NOT THE DIADEM OF ZEMF! HE WHO CAME HERE WAS AN IMPOSTER. HE TOOK THE TRUE DIADEM AND LEFT BEHIND THIS COPY.

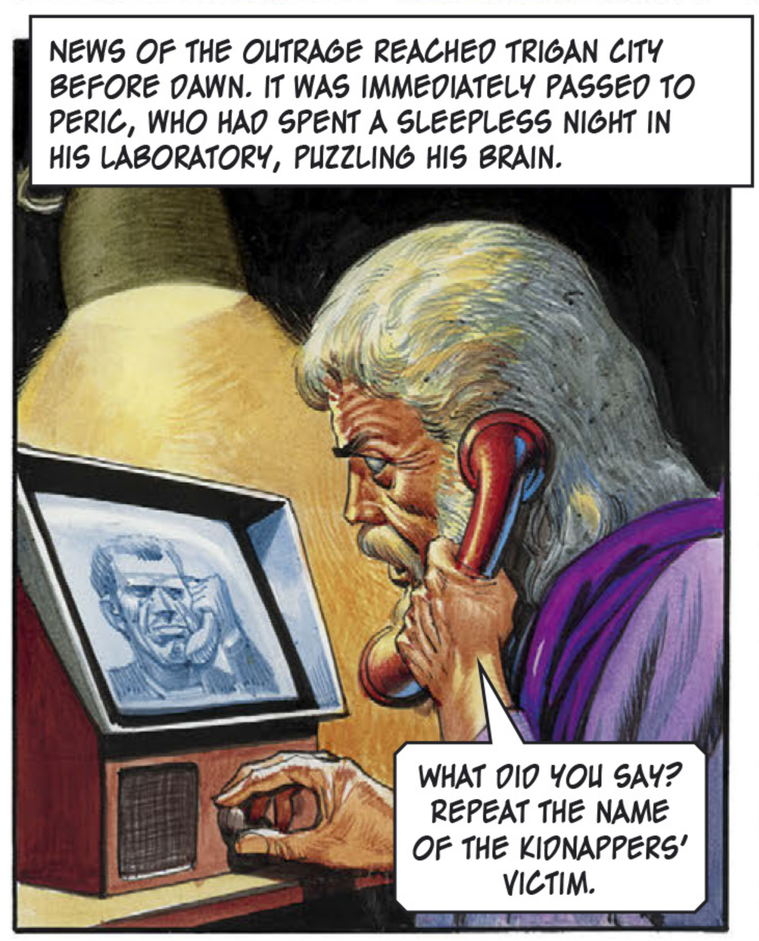

THE FIENDISH CUNNING BY WHICH THE DIADEM HAD BEEN TAKEN WAS THE MOST SENSATIONAL ASPECT OF THE NEWS STORY.
FOLLOWING ON AN UNSUCCESSFUL ATTACK UPON THE TEMPLE, ONE OF THE THIEVES POSED AS THE ABBOT OF ZEMF, SWITCHED THE DIADEM FOR A FAKE AND MADE OFF WITH THE TRUE JEWEL!
THE EMPEROR TRIGO SUMMONED AN EXTRAORDINARY SESSION OF THE IMPERIAL COUNCIL.
JANNO'S KIDNAPPING AND THE VARIOUS THEFTS ARE CLEARLY THE WORK OF ONE WILL. BUT WHAT IS THE REASON BEHIND IT ALL, PERIC?
MAJESTY, IT IS DIFFICULT TO SAY.
THE GREAT SCIENTIST PONDERED ON HIS SOVEREIGN'S QUESTION.
IT IS SIMPLE TO GUESS THE MOTIVE BEHIND THE KIDNAPPING OF A MEMBER OF THE IMPERIAL FAMILY. BUT WHAT CONNECTION DOES THAT HAVE WITH THE THEFT OF A PILE OF ANCIENT FOSSILISED BONES?
TRIGO'S RETORT WAS SHORT AND BRUTAL.
YOU WILL FIND THAT CONNECTION, PERIC! AND YOU WILL WORK DAY AND NIGHT TILL YOU DO!
IT WAS NIGHT. THE GREAT OCEAN LINER 'EMPEROR TRIGO' WAS HEADING FOR PORT WITH A HOST OF PASSENGERS.
DANGER LURKED NEARBY.
PREPARE TO SURFACE AND FIRE A WARNING PROJECTILE.
THE FIRST WARNING OF PERIL CAME WITH A THUNDERCLAP OF SOUND, FOLLOWED BY A STREAK OF LURID FLAME.

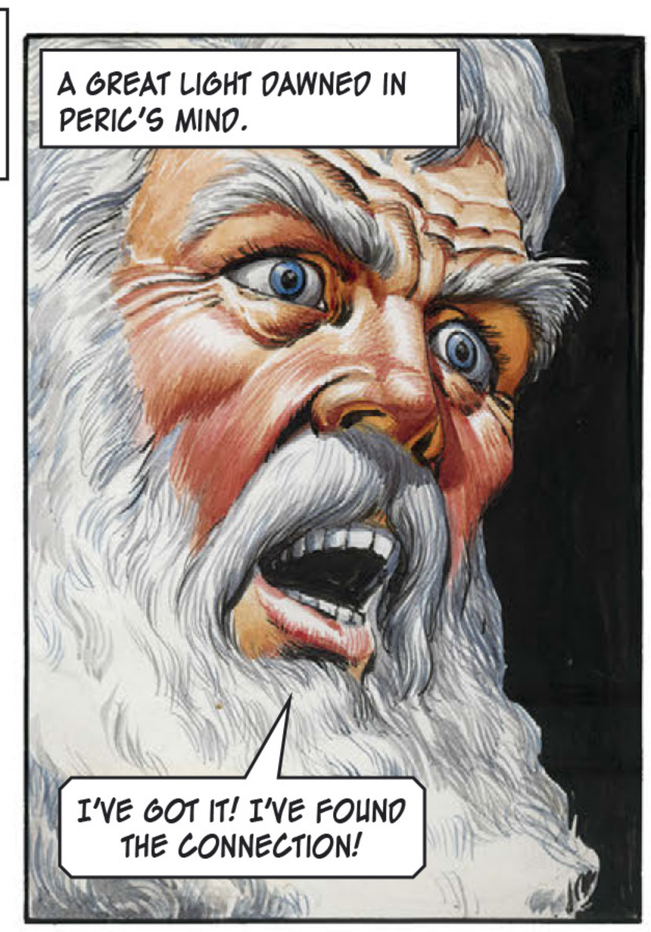
THEY'RE SIGNALLING US TO HALT, OR ELSE THEY'LL SINK US.
STOP THE SHIP!

A PARTY OF MASKED AND RUTHLESS RAIDERS SOON BOARDED THE SHIP.
SILENCE!
SEE HERE, YOU ANIMALS! I PROTEST... AAAAAGHH!


DOWN INTO THE PALATIAL DINING SALOON, AMONG THE HORRIFIED PASSENGERS, THEY MARCHED.

THEY HALTED BY A MILD-LOOKING INDIVIDUAL WHO WAS EATING ALONE.
GET TO YOUR FEET! IT'S YOU WE'VE COME FOR!

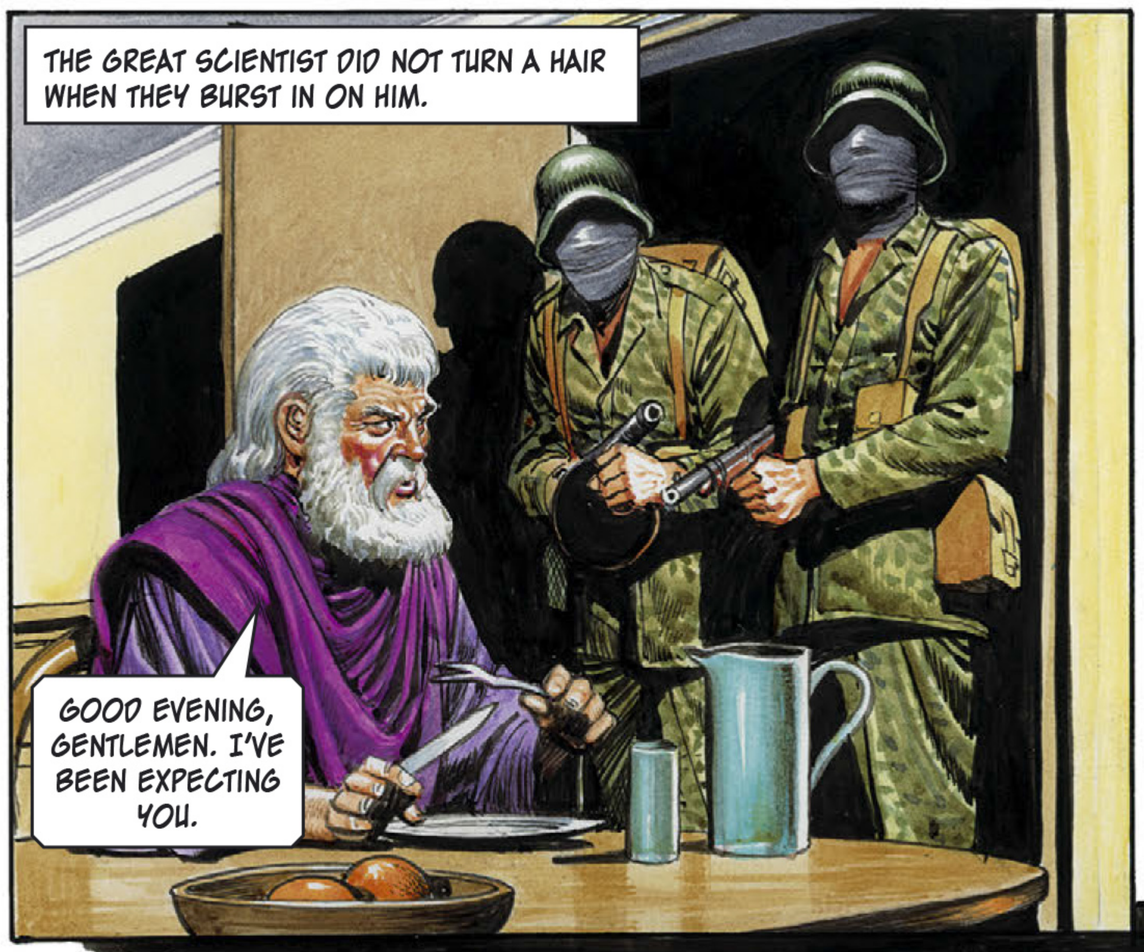

NEWS OF THE OUTRAGE REACHED TRIGAN CITY BEFORE DAWN. IT WAS IMMEDIATELY PASSED TO PERIC, WHO HAD SPENT A SLEEPLESS NIGHT IN HIS LABORATORY, PUZZLING HIS BRAIN.
WHAT DID YOU SAY? REPEAT THE NAME OF THE KIDNAPPERS' VICTIM.


A GREAT LIGHT DAWNED IN PERIC'S MIND.
I'VE GOT IT! I'VE FOUND THE CONNECTION!

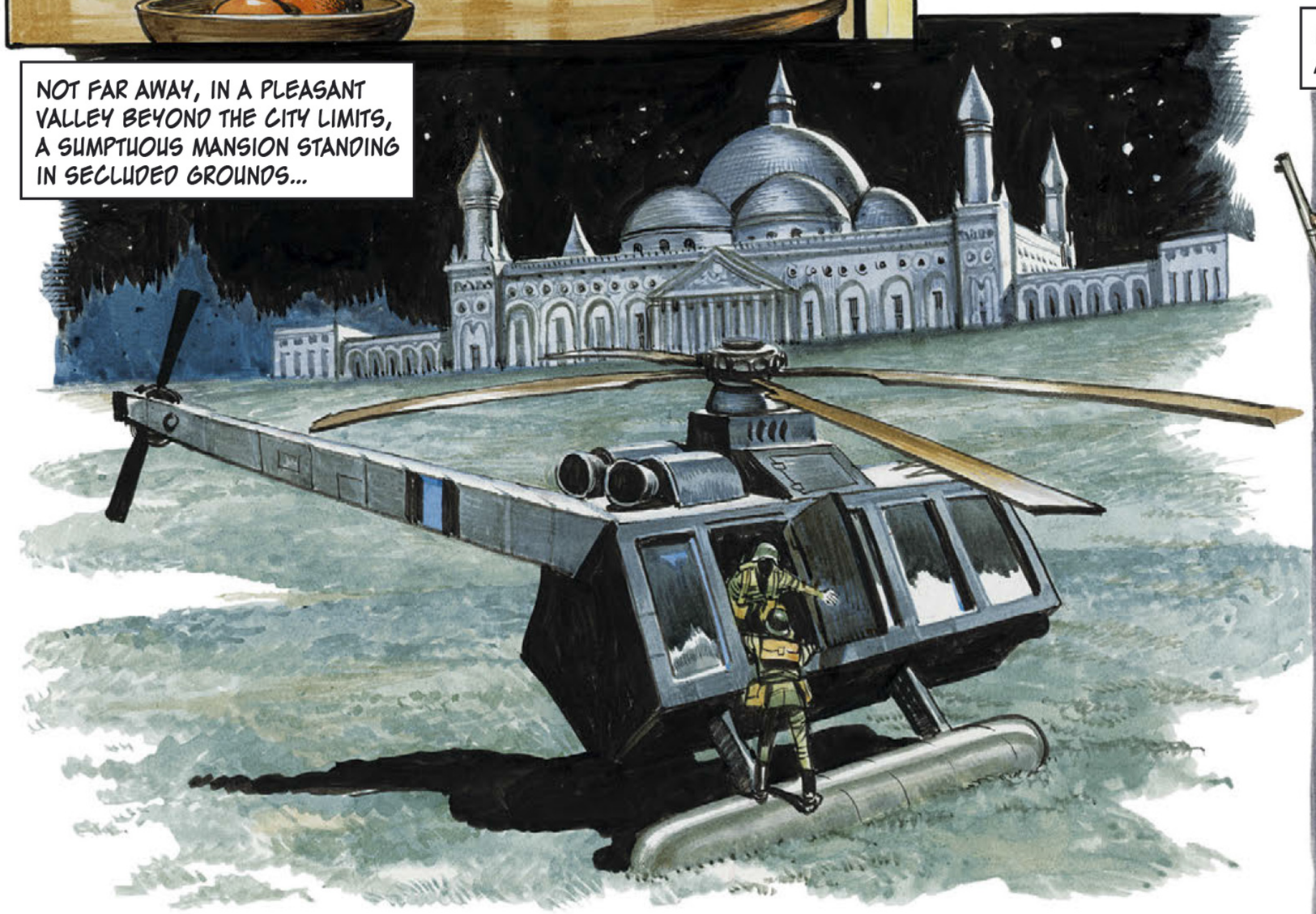
NEXT MORNING, THE PLANET'S NEWSPAPERS SCREAMED "CHORPINAL KIDNAPPED! ELEKTON'S GREATEST LIVING COMPOSER SNATCHED FROM THE LINER 'EMPEROR TRIGO' WHILE ON HIS WAY TO CONDUCT HIS NEWEST SYMPHONY."
PERIC WAS AT THE IMPERIAL PALACE SOON AFTER DAWN.
HIS IMPERIAL MAJESTY IS NOT TO BE DISTURBED!
STAND ASIDE. MY BUSINESS WON'T WAIT!
TRIGO WAS AT SWORD PRACTICE.
IMPERIAL MAJESTY, I TRIED TO...
GOOD MORNING, PERIC. IT MUST BE AN IMPORTANT MATTER TO BRING YOU HERE SO EARLY.
IT IS, SIRE!
I REQUEST THAT YOU DESIGNATE ME BY IMPERIAL PROCLAMATION AS SUPREME SCIENTIST OF ELEKTON.
WELL, BY ALL THE STARS!
THE EMPEROR WAS WRYLY AMUSED.
AND YOU SUCH A MODEST INDIVIDUAL. YOU ARE UNDOUBTEDLY THE GREATEST SCIENTIST ALIVE BUT DO WE HAVE TO THRUST IT DOWN THE THROAT OF EVERY OTHER SCIENTIST ON THE PLANET?
IT IS NOT FOR MYSELF I ASK IT, MAJESTY, BUT PART OF MY PLAN TO GET TO THE BOTTOM OF THESE THEFTS AND KIDNAPPINGS...
IS IT, INDEED?
YES, SIRE. I WILL EXPLAIN...
PERIC'S EXPLANATION WAS SO SATISFACTORY TO TRIGO THAT A SPECIAL CEREMONY TOOK PLACE THE SAME DAY, TO WHICH ALL THE SCIENTISTS WITHIN CALL WERE HASTILY SUMMONED.
PERIC, IN APPRECIATION OF YOUR GREAT WORKS FOR THE CAUSE OF SCIENTIFIC PROGRESS, I GRANT YOU THE TITLE OF 'SUPREME SCIENTIST OF ELEKTON'.
WHO'S IDEA WAS THIS? MEANINGLESS MUMBO JUMBO.
SURELY NOT THE EMPEROR'S? AND PERIC WOULD NEVER HAVE THE IMPUDENCE TO SUGGEST IT.

THE CEREMONY OVER, PERIC TOOK HIMSELF TO HIS VILLA IN THE SUBURBS, WHERE HE RELAXED.
AND NOW... TO WAIT!

HE DID NOT HAVE LONG TO WAIT. THAT SAME EVENING...

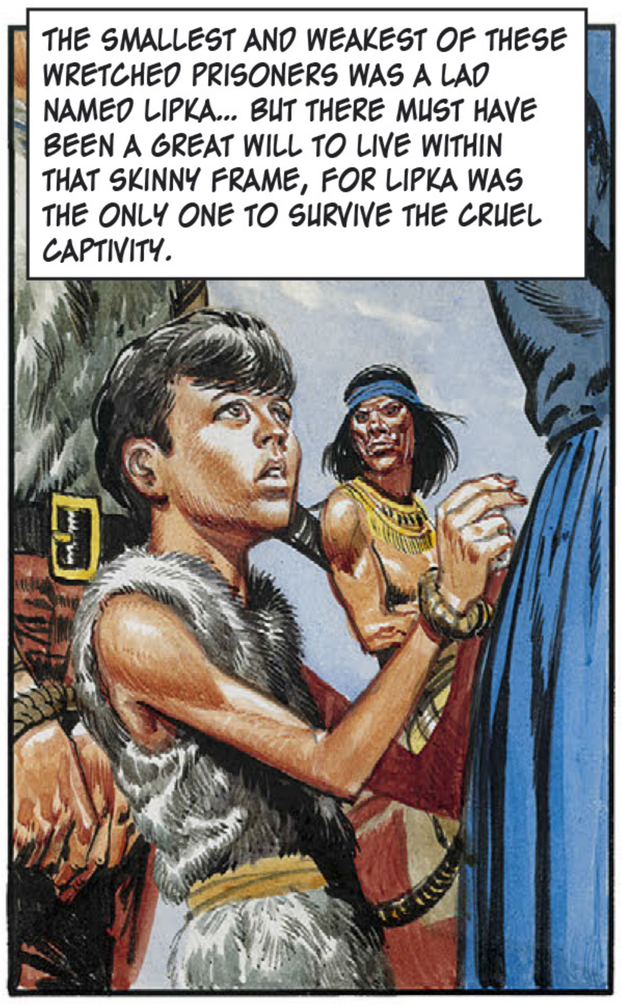

THE GREAT SCIENTIST DID NOT TURN A HAIR WHEN THEY BURST IN ON HIM.
GOOD EVENING, GENTLEMEN. I'VE BEEN EXPECTING YOU.

THEY TOOK HIM AWAY.

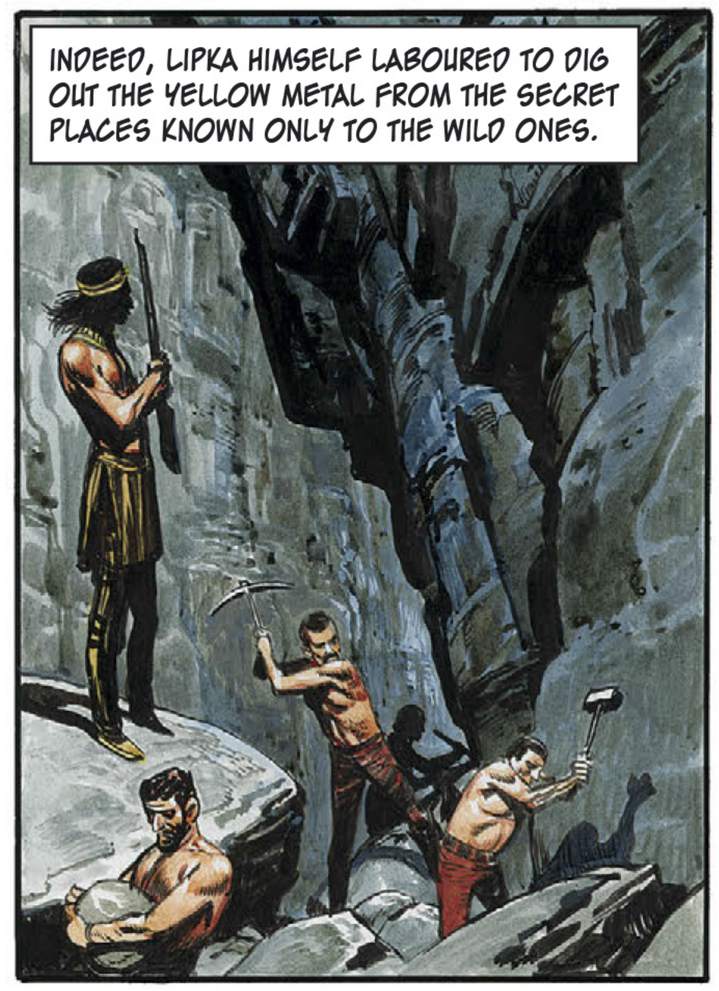

NOT FAR AWAY, IN A PLEASANT VALLEY BEYOND THE CITY LIMITS, A SUMPTUOUS MANSION STANDING IN SECLUDED GROUNDS...

HE WAS TAKEN INTO THE PALATIAL DWELLING AND BROUGHT BEFORE THE OWNER.
WE HAVE HIM, MASTER.

FORTY LUNAR YEARS BEFORE THESE EVENTS TOOK PLACE–BEFORE TRIGO HAD FOUNDED THE GREAT CITY AND EMPIRE THAT BEARS HIS NAME–A SMALL CARAVAN OF SETTLERS WAS PASSING ACROSS THE BARREN AND INHOSPITABLE DESERT OF VORG.
SUDDENLY...
ALARM! ALARM! THE WILD ONES ARE COMING!
...THEY CAME–SHRIEKING THEIR WILD WAR-CRIES!
HI-YAAAAAAHHH!
DEATH TO THE INTRUDERS!
DON LAWRENCE
THE SETTLERS FOUGHT FOR THEIR LIVES–AND MOST OF THEM FOUGHT IN VAIN! THE FEW WHO SURVIVED THE SAVAGE ONSLAUGHT WERE MADE PRISONER OF THE WILD ONES.

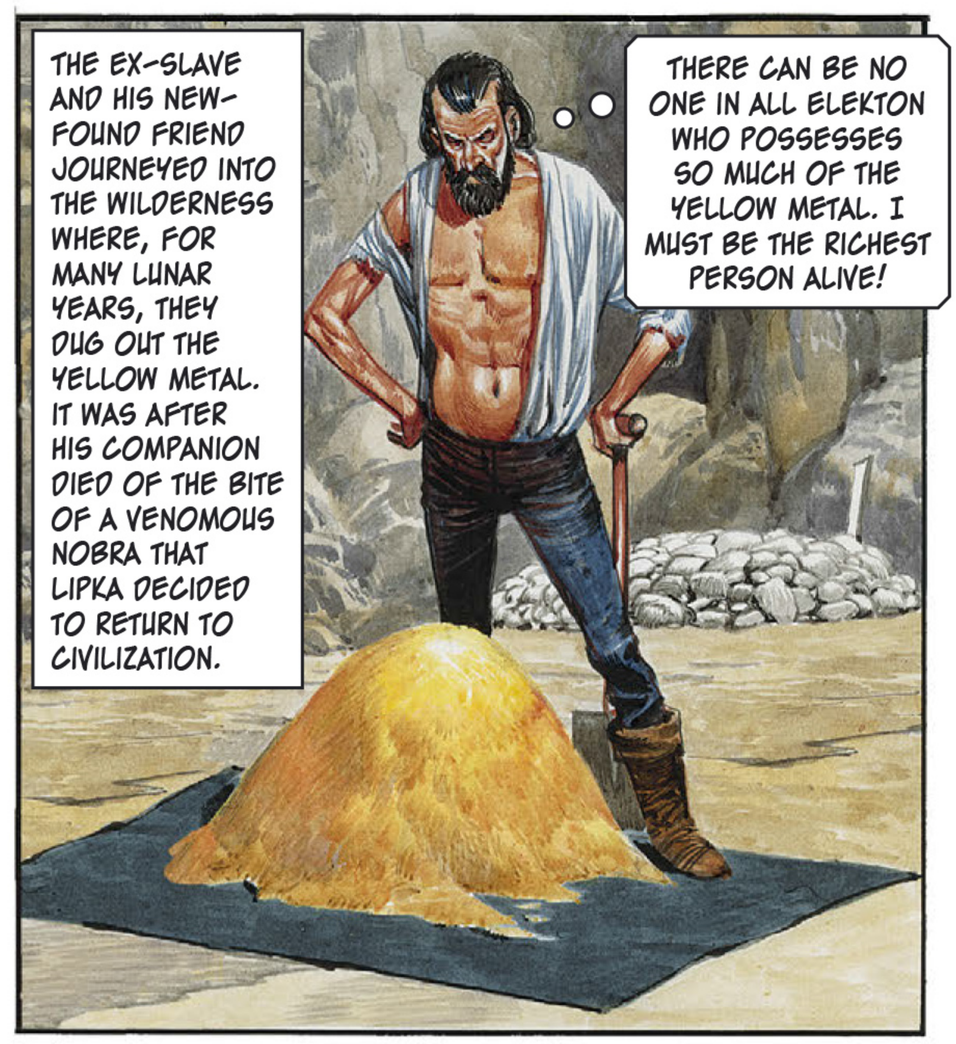

THE SMALLEST AND WEAKEST OF THESE WRETCHED PRISONERS WAS A LAD NAMED LIPKA... BUT THERE MUST HAVE BEEN A GREAT WILL TO LIVE WITHIN THAT SKINNY FRAME, FOR LIPKA WAS THE ONLY ONE TO SURVIVE THE CRUEL CAPTIVITY.

IN THE LONG YEARS THAT FOLLOWED, LIPKA WAS A SLAVE TO THE PROUD AND SAVAGE WARRIORS OF THE DESERT, WHO COVERED THEMSELVES WITH THE YELLOW METAL THAT WAS PRIZED ALL OVER ELEKTON.

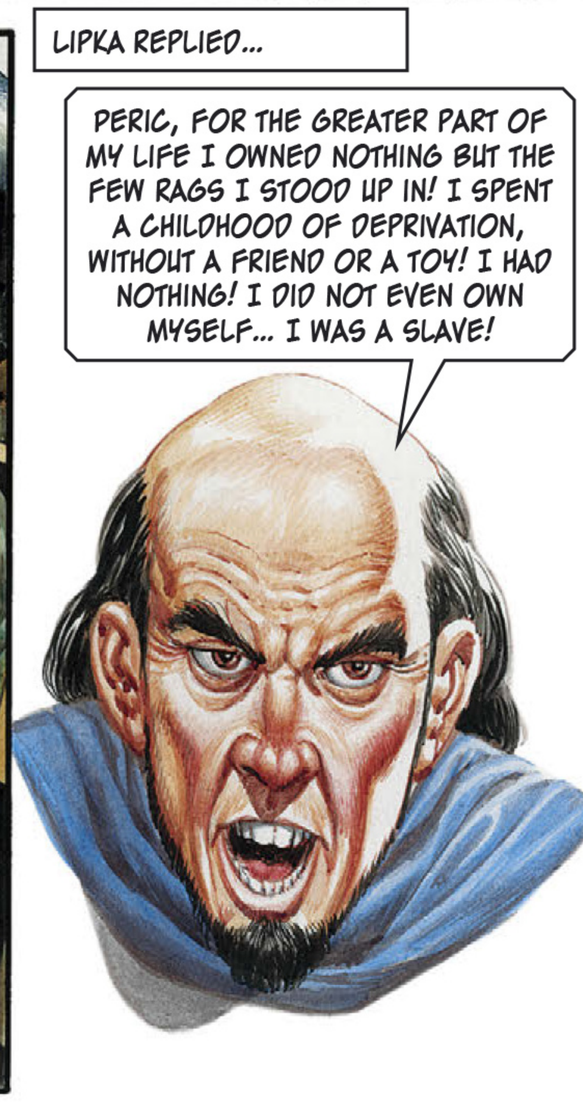

INDEED, LIPKA HIMSELF LABOURED TO DIG OUT THE YELLOW METAL FROM THE SECRET PLACES KNOWN ONLY TO THE WILD ONES.

LIPKA WAS A GROWN MAN, HARDENED BY YEARS OF SLAVERY AND DEPRIVATION, WHEN HE MANAGED TO ESCAPE FROM HIS CRUEL CAPTORS.

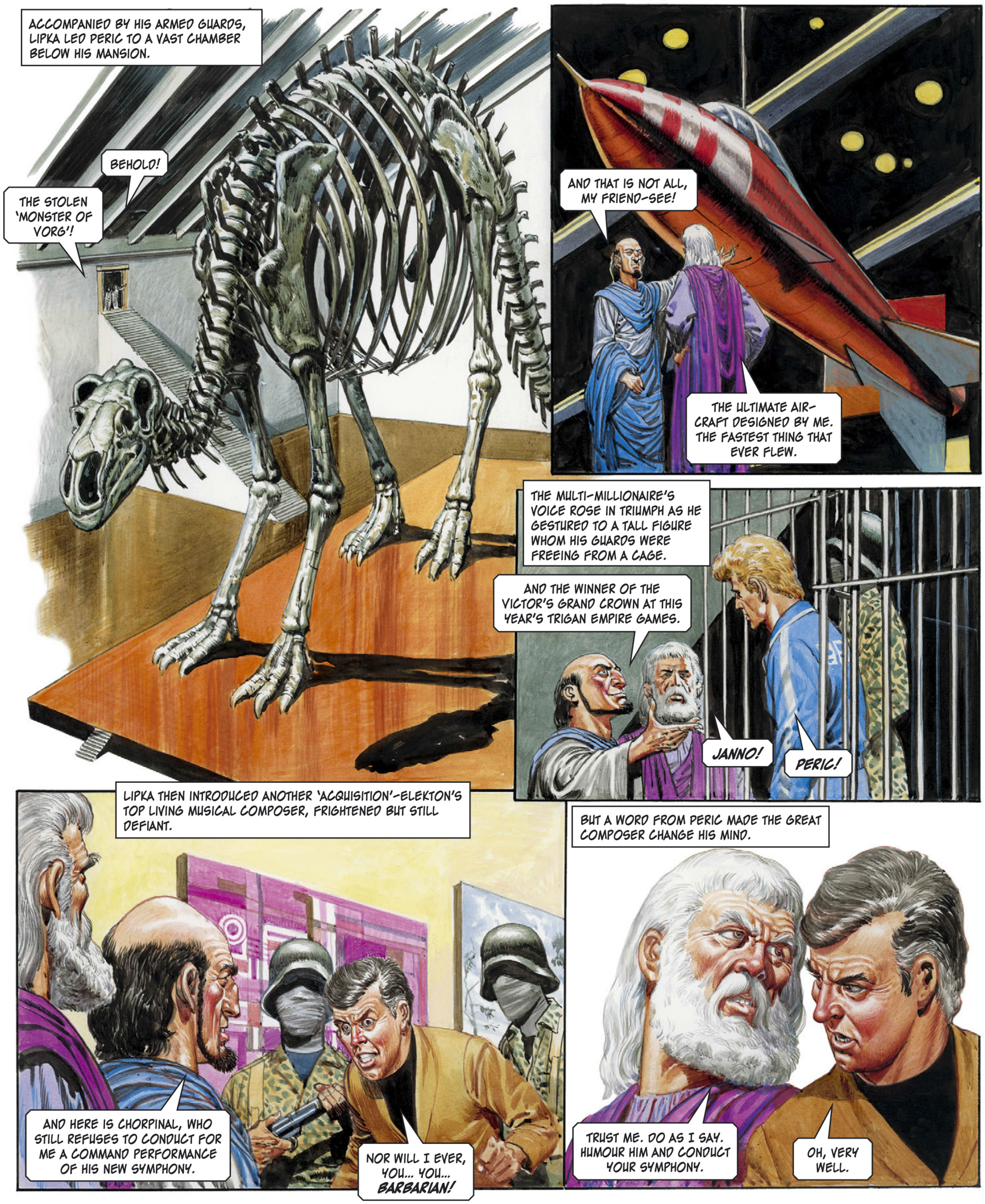
LATER, IN A FRONTIER TOWN, HE TOLD HIS ASTONISHING STORY TO AN INTERESTED PARTY.
YOU SAY THAT YOU KNOW WHERE THE WILD ONES DIG OUT THE YELLOW METAL?
YES. I COULD TAKE YOU THERE. IT'S PERFECTLY SAFE, FOR THE WILD ONES HAVE A SUPERSTITION THAT ONLY ALLOWS THEM TO DIG FOR THE YELLOW METAL ON ONE DAY OF THE YEAR.


THE EX-SLAVE AND HIS NEW-FOUND FRIEND JOURNEYED INTO THE WILDERNESS WHERE, FOR MANY LUNAR YEARS, THEY DUG OUT THE YELLOW METAL. IT WAS AFTER HIS COMPANION DIED OF THE BITE OF A VENOMOUS NOBRA THAT LIPKA DECIDED TO RETURN TO CIVILIZATION.
THERE CAN BE NO ONE IN ALL ELEKTON WHO POSSESSES SO MUCH OF THE YELLOW METAL. I MUST BE THE RICHEST PERSON ALIVE!

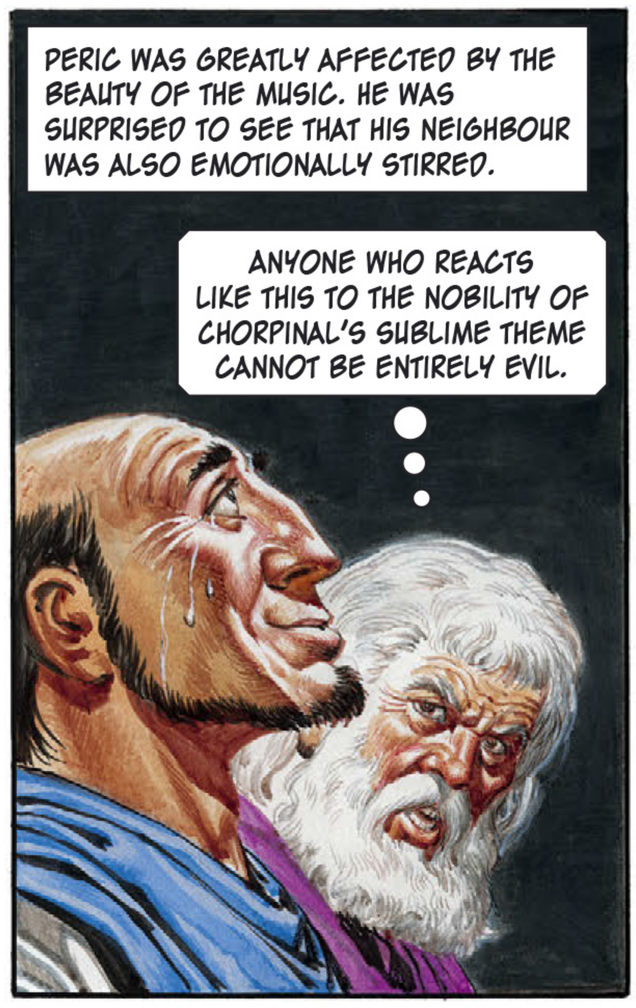
IT WAS THE SELFSAME LIPKA-THE RICHEST PERSON ALIVE ON THE PLANET ELEKTON-WHO CONFRONTED THE KIDNAPPED SCIENTIST PERIC IN THE PALATIAL MANSION NEAR TRIGAN CITY.
SO YOU ARE PERIC, THE SUPREME SCIENTIST OF ELEKTON.
AND YOU I RECOGNISE AS THE MULTI-MILLIONAIRE LIPKA. BUT, TELL ME, WITH ALL YOUR BOUNDLESS WEALTH, WHAT HAS DRIVEN YOU TO CRIME?

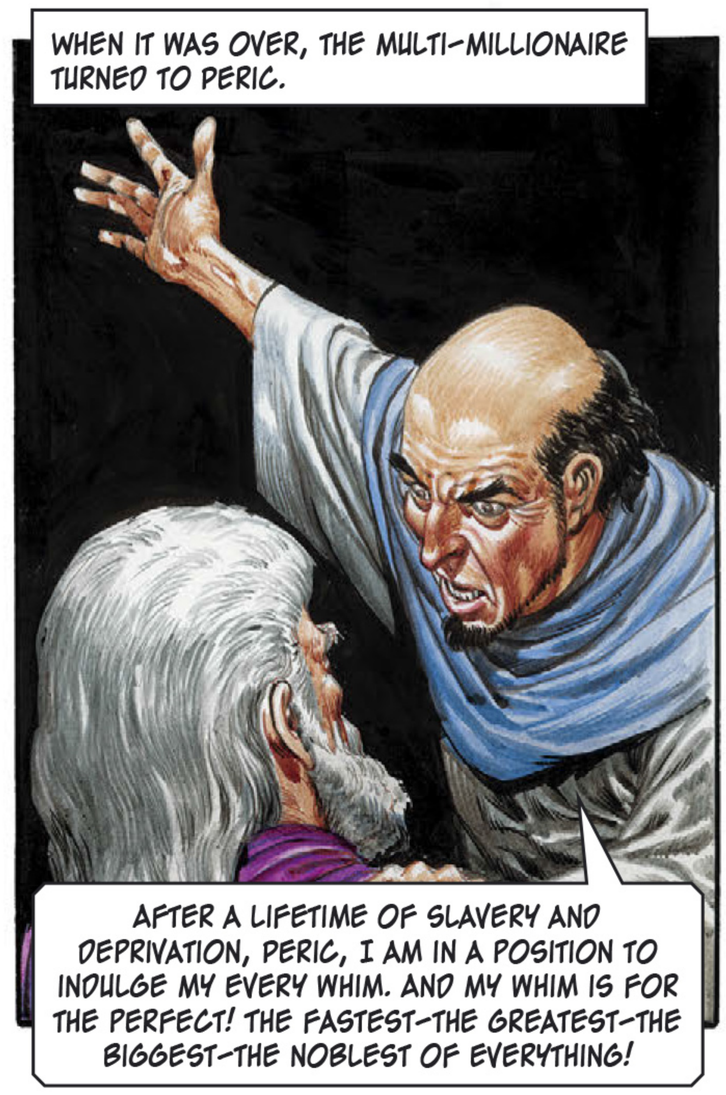

LIPKA REPLIED...
PERIC, FOR THE GREATER PART OF MY LIFE I OWNED NOTHING BUT THE FEW RAGS I STOOD UP IN! I SPENT A CHILDHOOD OF DEPRIVATION, WITHOUT A FRIEND OR A TOY! I HAD NOTHING! I DID NOT EVEN OWN MYSELF... I WAS A SLAVE!

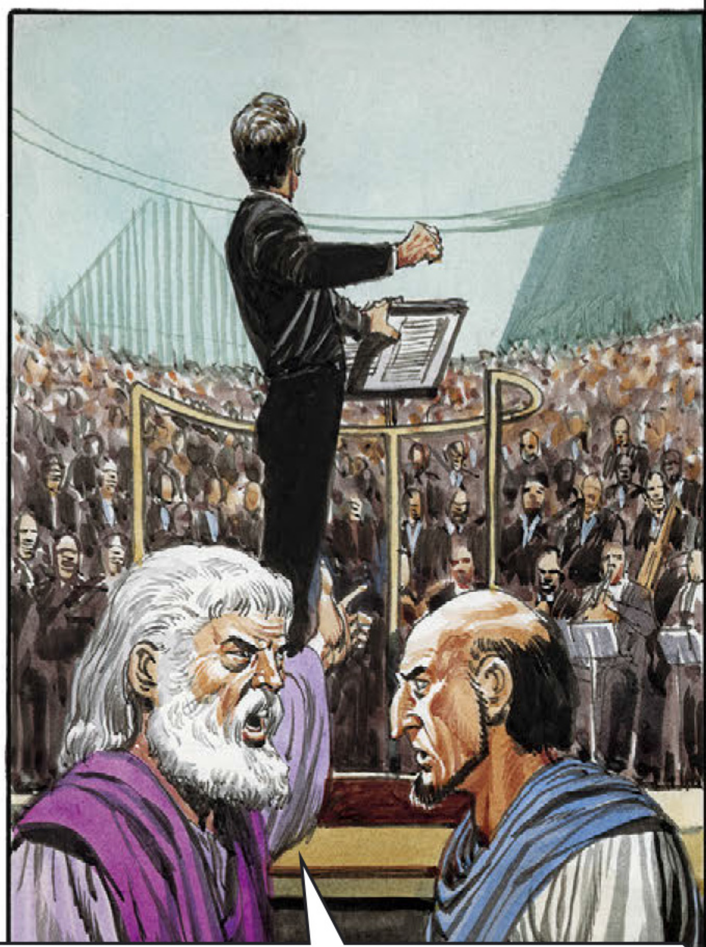
NOW ALL THAT IS CHANGED! COME! I WILL SHOW YOU THINGS THAT WILL FILL YOU WITH WONDER AND DISBELIEF! COME!

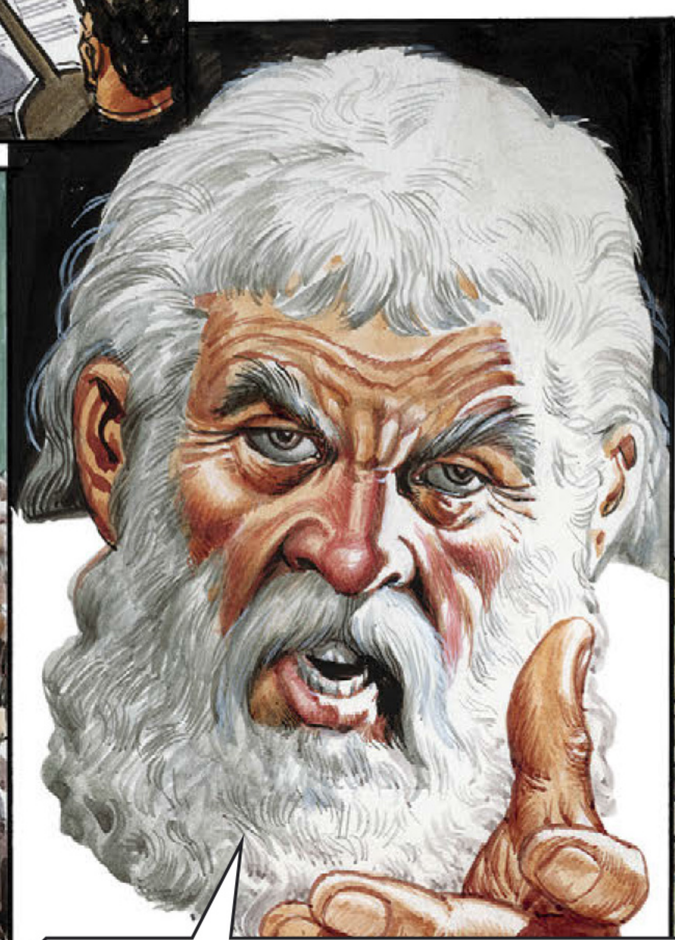

ACCOMPANIED BY HIS ARMED GUARDS, LIPKA LED PERIC TO A VAST CHAMBER BELOW HIS MANSION.
BEHOLD!
THE STOLEN 'MONSTER OF VORG'!
AND THAT IS NOT ALL, MY FRIEND-SEE!
THE ULTIMATE AIR-CRAFT DESIGNED BY ME. THE FASTEST THING THAT EVER FLEW.
THE MULTI-MILLIONAIRE'S VOICE ROSE IN TRIUMPH AS HE GESTURED TO A TALL FIGURE WHOM HIS GUARDS WERE FREEING FROM A CAGE.
AND THE WINNER OF THE VICTOR'S GRAND CROWN AT THIS YEAR'S TRIGAN EMPIRE GAMES.
JANNO!
PERIC!
LIPKA THEN INTRODUCED ANOTHER 'ACQUISITION'-ELEKTON'S TOP LIVING MUSICAL COMPOSER, FRIGHTENED BUT STILL DEFIANT.
AND HERE IS CHORPINAL, WHO STILL REFUSES TO CONDUCT FOR ME A COMMAND PERFORMANCE OF HIS NEW SYMPHONY.
NOR WILL I EVER, YOU... YOU... BARBARIAN!
BUT A WORD FROM PERIC MADE THE GREAT COMPOSER CHANGE HIS MIND.
TRUST ME. DO AS I SAY. HUMOUR HIM AND CONDUCT YOUR SYMPHONY.
OH, VERY WELL.

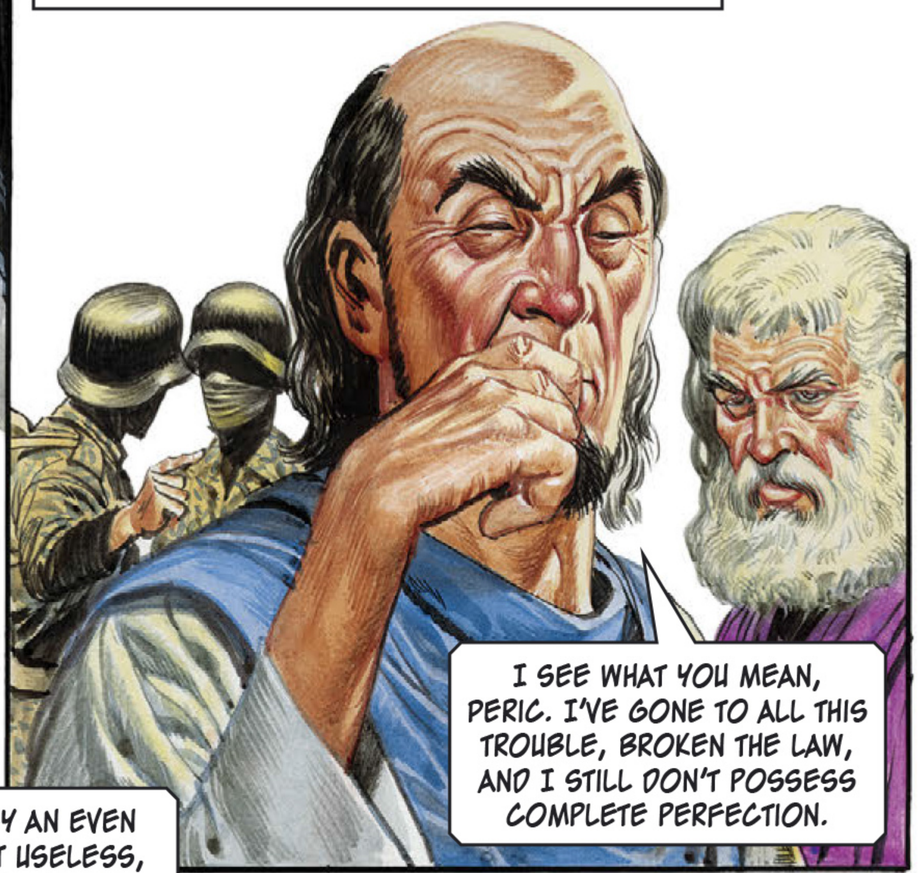
SO, IN A PRIVATE CONCERT HALL OF THE MANSION, WITH AN ORCHESTRA OF TWO HUNDRED, CHORPINAL CONDUCTED A PERFORMANCE OF HIS MASTER WORK, THE FAMOUS 'FREEDOM SYMPHONY'.


PERIC WAS GREATLY AFFECTED BY THE BEAUTY OF THE MUSIC. HE WAS SURPRISED TO SEE THAT HIS NEIGHBOUR WAS ALSO EMOTIONALLY STIRRED.
ANYONE WHO REACTS LIKE THIS TO THE NOBILITY OF CHORPINAL'S SUBLIME THEME CANNOT BE ENTIRELY EVIL.


WHEN IT WAS OVER, THE MULTI-MILLIONAIRE TURNED TO PERIC.
AFTER A LIFETIME OF SLAVERY AND DEPRIVATION, PERIC, I AM IN A POSITION TO INDULGE MY EVERY WHIM. AND MY WHIM IS FOR THE PERFECT! THE FASTEST-THE GREATEST-THE BIGGEST-THE NOBLEST OF EVERYTHING!


I UNDERSTAND YOUR INTENTION, LIPKA, BUT YOU ARE MISTAKEN. TO BEGIN WITH, CHORPINAL, WHOSE WHOLE WORK IS DEVOTED TO THE THEME OF FREEDOM, WILL NEVER COMPOSE AGAIN WHILE YOU HOLD HIM PRISONER.


THE 'MONSTER OF VORG' WAS PRE-DATED BY AN EVEN BIGGER CREATURE. IT IS QUITE FEASIBLE, BUT USELESS, TO BUILD A FASTER MACHINE THAN THE ULTIMATE AIR-CRAFT. JANNO'S RECORD AT THE EMPIRE GAMES HAS ALREADY BEEN BROKEN. AS FOR THE GREEN DIADEM, THE FAKE YOU LEFT IN ITS PLACE IS STILL BEING WORSHIPPED BY ITS DEVOTEES WHO HAVE NOT BEEN TOLD THAT YOU HAVE STOLEN THE ORIGINAL.

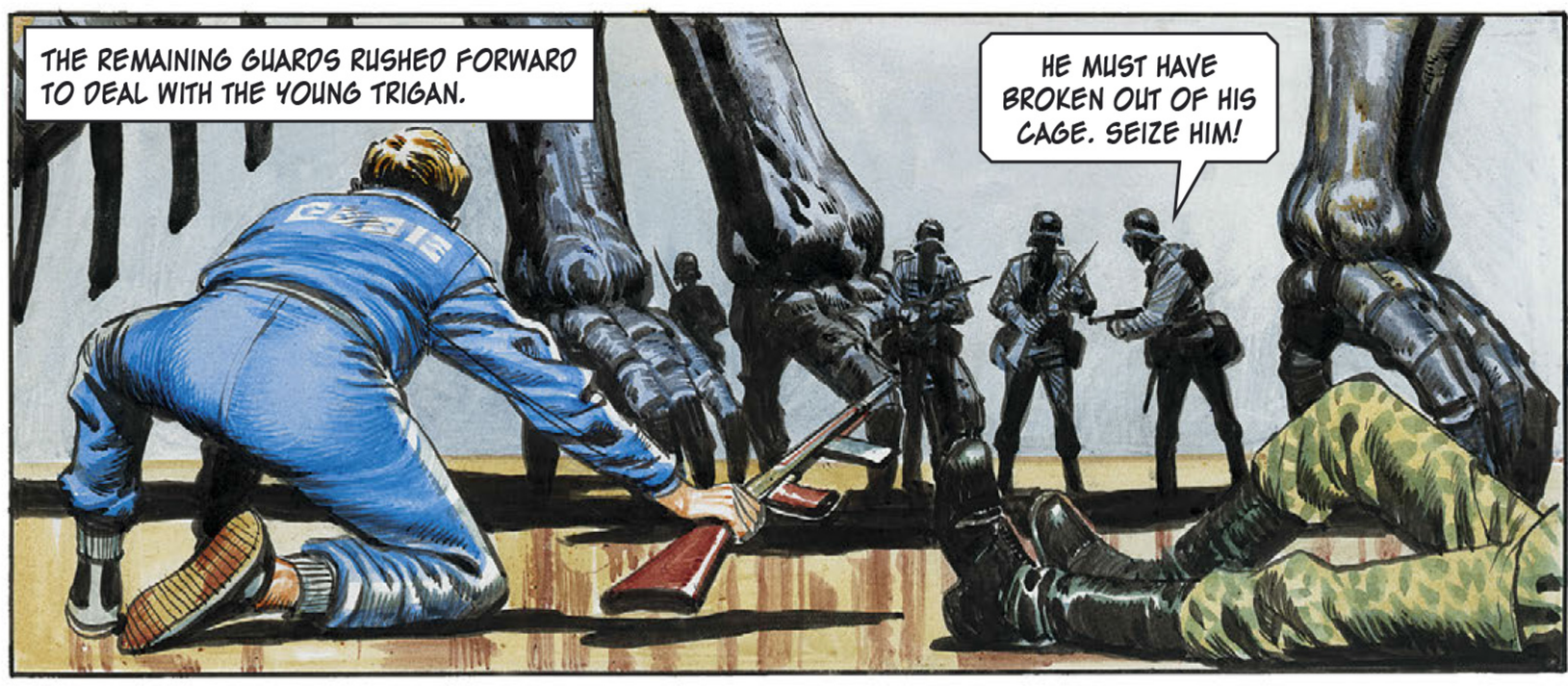

PERIC WAS QUICK TO OBSERVE THAT HIS ORATORY WAS HAVING A MARKED EFFECT UPON LIPKA.
I SEE WHAT YOU MEAN, PERIC. I'VE GONE TO ALL THIS TROUBLE, BROKEN THE LAW, AND I STILL DON'T POSSESS COMPLETE PERFECTION.

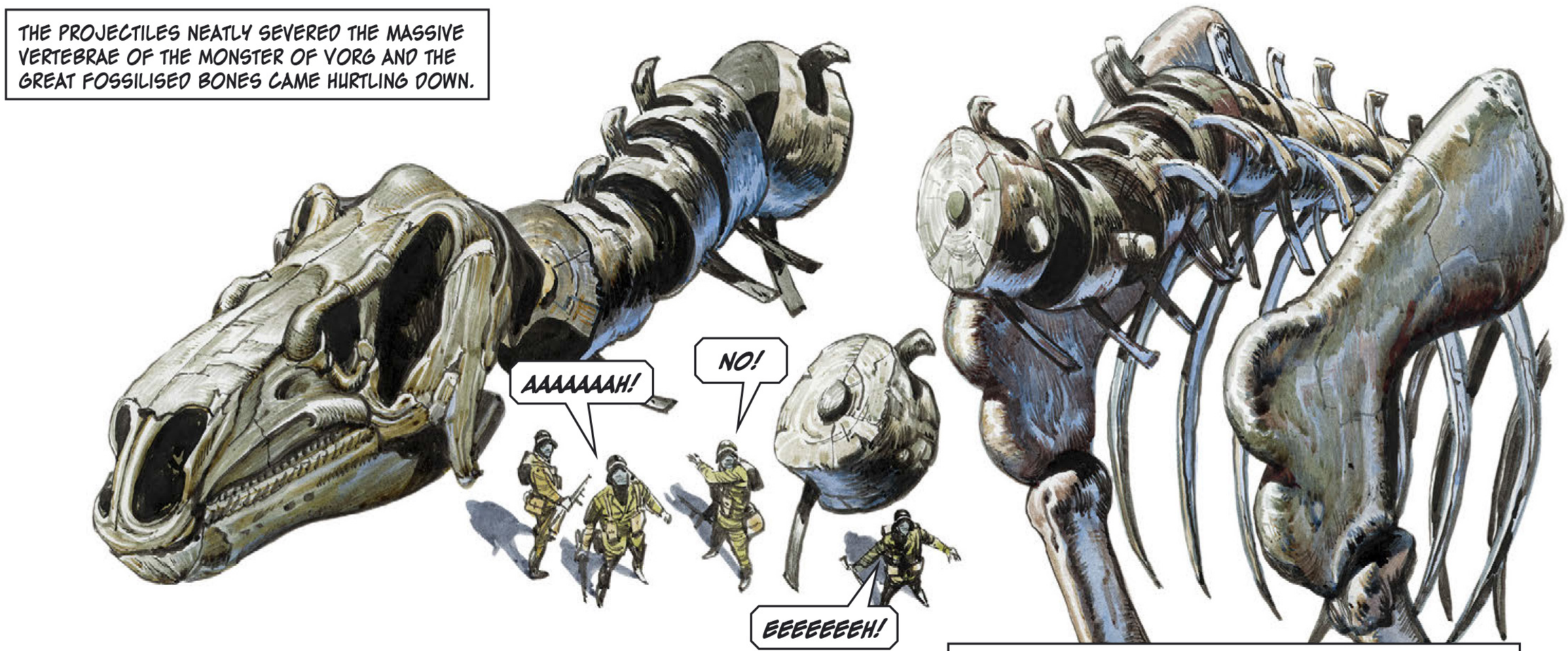
IT'S NOT TOO LATE, LIPKA. FREE THOSE YOU HAVE KIDNAPPED! RETURN THE OTHER THINGS AND THROW YOURSELF ON IMPERIAL MERCY.
YES, PERIC, I WILL.

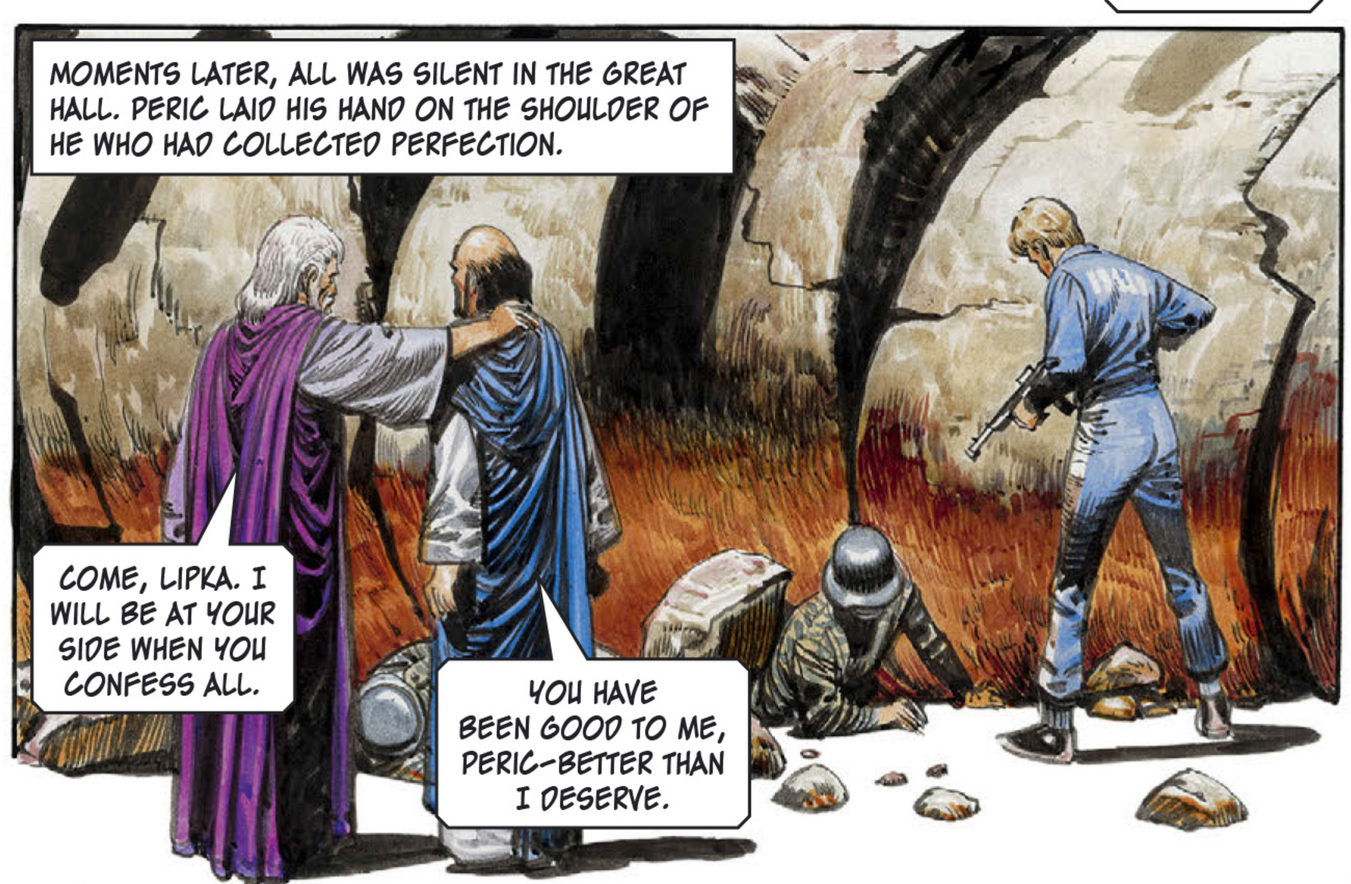
YOU WILL DO NO SUCH THING, LIPKA, BECAUSE YOU ARE GOING TO PERISH-BOTH OF YOU! NOW!

BUT ONE PERSON HAD BEEN ENTIRELY OVERLOOKED– JANNO. AND HE BURST UPON THE SCENE LIKE A THUNDERBOLT.

DON LAWRENCE




THE PROJECTILES NEATLY SEVERED THE MASSIVE VERTEBRAE OF THE MONSTER OF VORG AND THE GREAT FOSSILISED BONES CAME HURTLING DOWN.
AAAAAAAH!
NO!
EEEEEEEH!

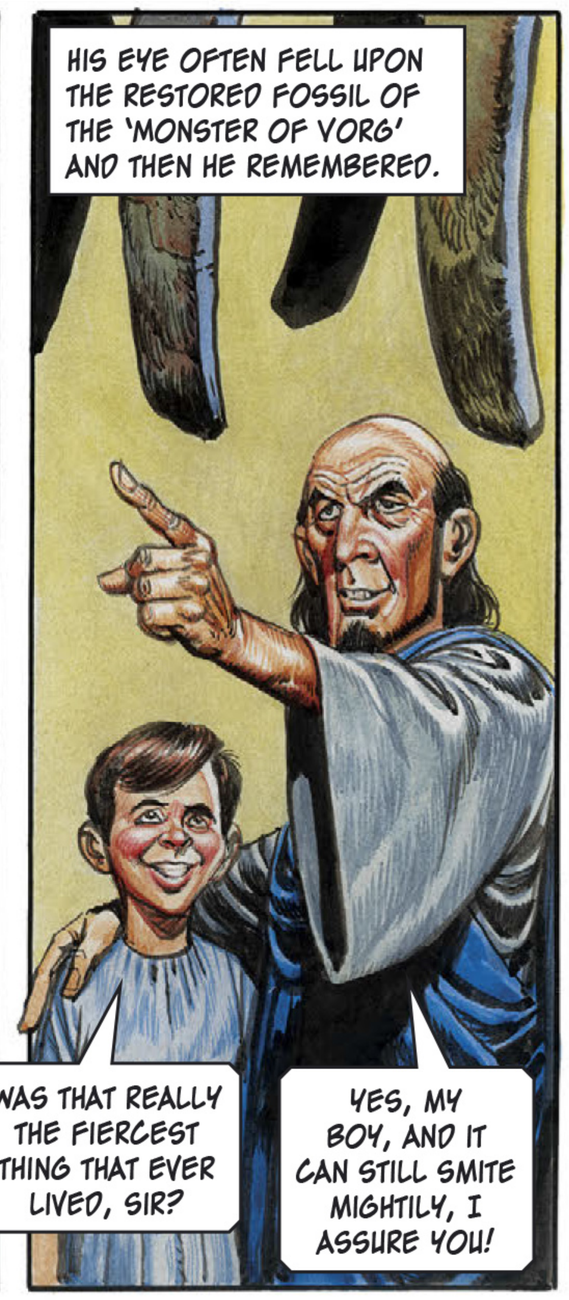

MOMENTS LATER, ALL WAS SILENT IN THE GREAT HALL. PERIC LAID HIS HAND ON THE SHOULDER OF HE WHO HAD COLLECTED PERFECTION.
COME, LIPKA. I WILL BE AT YOUR SIDE WHEN YOU CONFESS ALL.
YOU HAVE BEEN GOOD TO ME, PERIC-BETTER THAN I DESERVE.

THE GREAT SCIENTIST PLEADED LIPKA'S CASE BEFORE THE HIGHEST AUTHORITY OF THE EMPIRE, TRIGO HIMSELF.
IT IS MY SUBMISSION, IMPERIAL MAJESTY, THAT LIPKA HAS NOT STOLEN FOR PROFIT, NOR HAS HE DONE ANY BODILY HARM TO ANYONE. FURTHERMORE, HE IS WILLING TO MAKE FULL RESTITUTION FOR ANY DAMAGE OR INCONVENIENCE CAUSED BY HIS INSATIABLE DESIRE TO BE SURROUNDED BY PERFECTION.

I AM WILLING TO PARDON HIM, PROVIDED WE CAN BE ASSURED THAT HE KEEPS HIS INSATIABLE DESIRE IN CHECK. ANY SUGGESTIONS, PERIC?
YES, SIRE. FRANKLY, THE FELLOW IS BORED TO DEATH BY BEING A MULTIMILLIONAIRE. HE NEEDS A JOB OF WORK!

WHAT EMPLOYMENT HAVE YOU IN MIND?
I THOUGHT YOUR IMPERIAL MAJESTY MIGHT APPOINT HIM CURATOR-GENERAL OF THE IMPERIAL MUSEUMS!

AND SO, LIPKA WAS FROM THEN ON SURROUNDED BY THE PERFECTION HE CRAVED. AS CURATOR-GENERAL, HE WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR EVERY MUSEUM IN THE VAST EMPIRE.
AND ALL MINE... IN A MANNER OF SPEAKING!


HIS EYE OFTEN FELL UPON THE RESTORED FOSSIL OF THE 'MONSTER OF VORG' AND THEN HE REMEMBERED.
WAS THAT REALLY THE FIERCEST THING THAT EVER LIVED, SIR?
YES, MY BOY, AND IT CAN STILL SMITE MIGHTILY, I ASSURE YOU!

LVII

THE TRIGAN EMPIRE

THE GREEN SMOG

Originally published in ***Look and Learn*** 732 - 739

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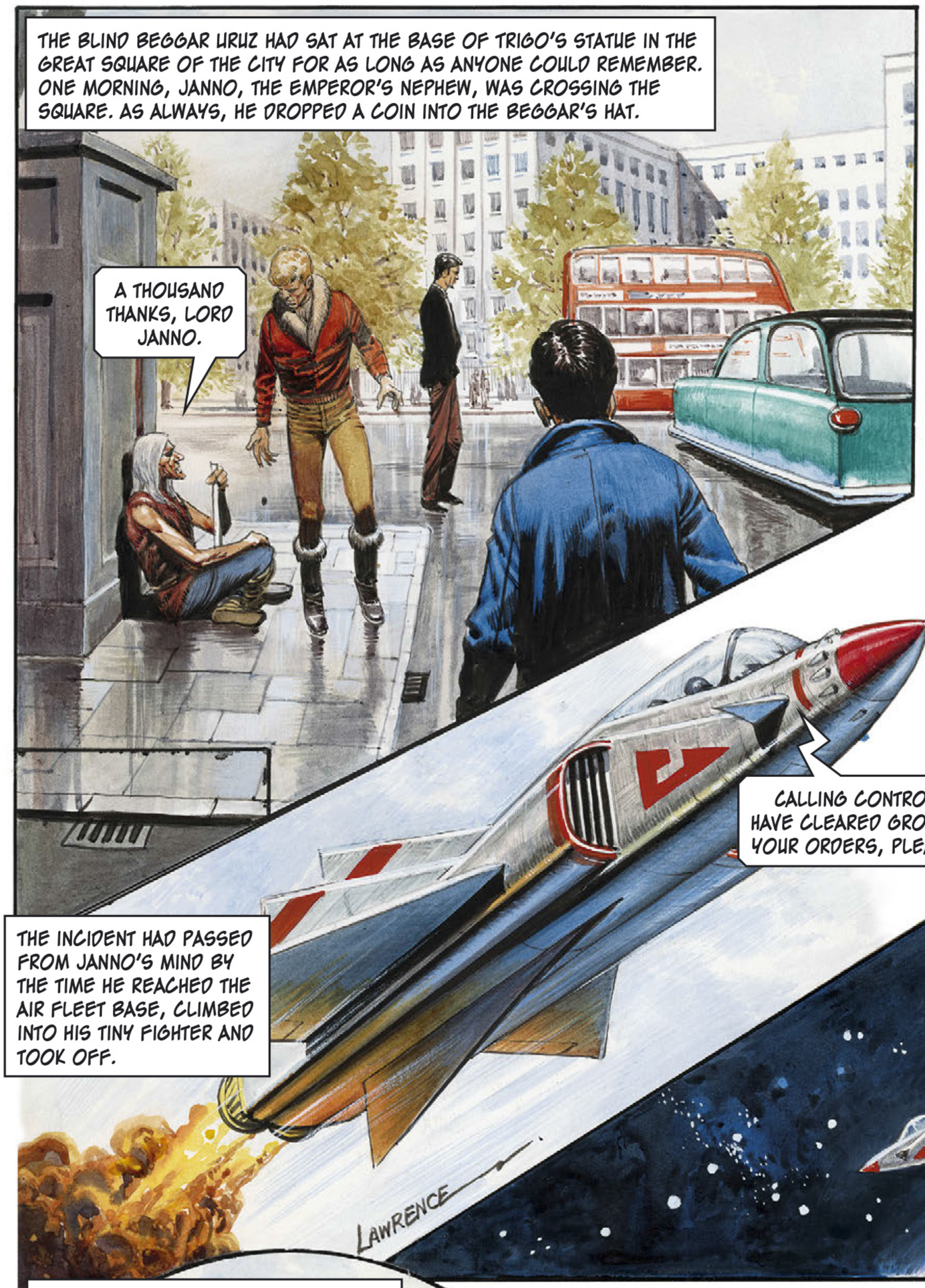
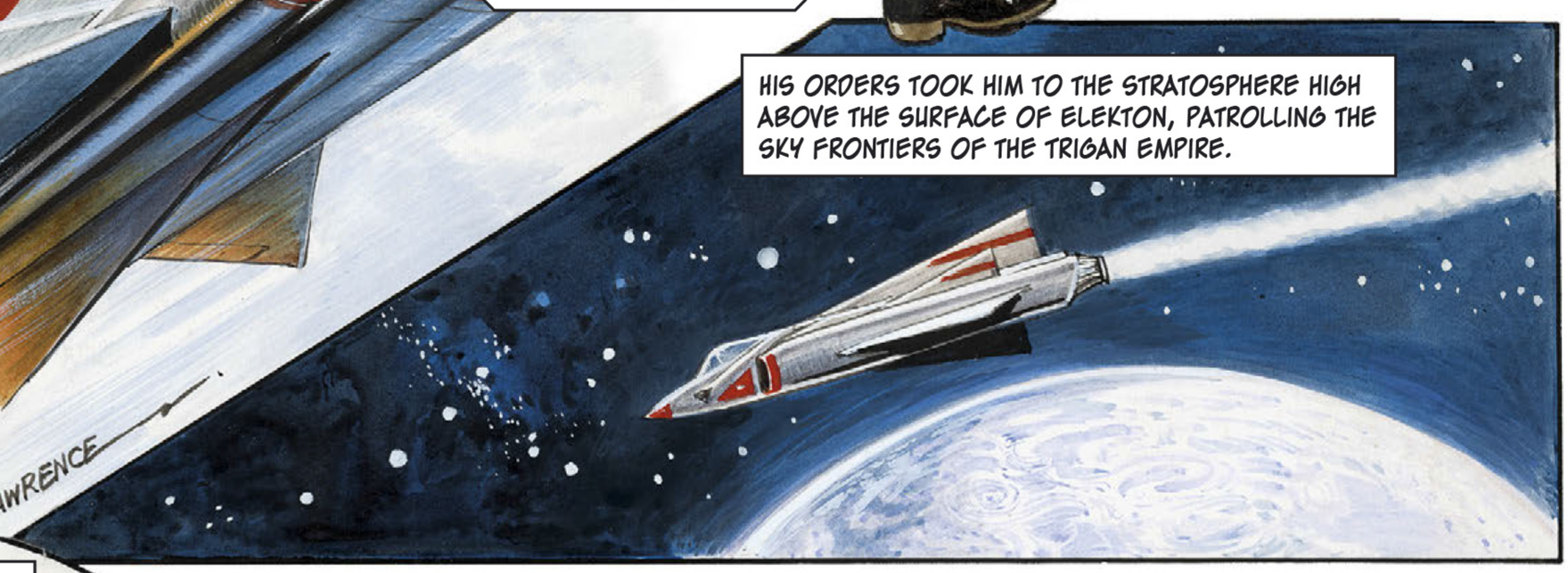
Story by Mike Butterworth

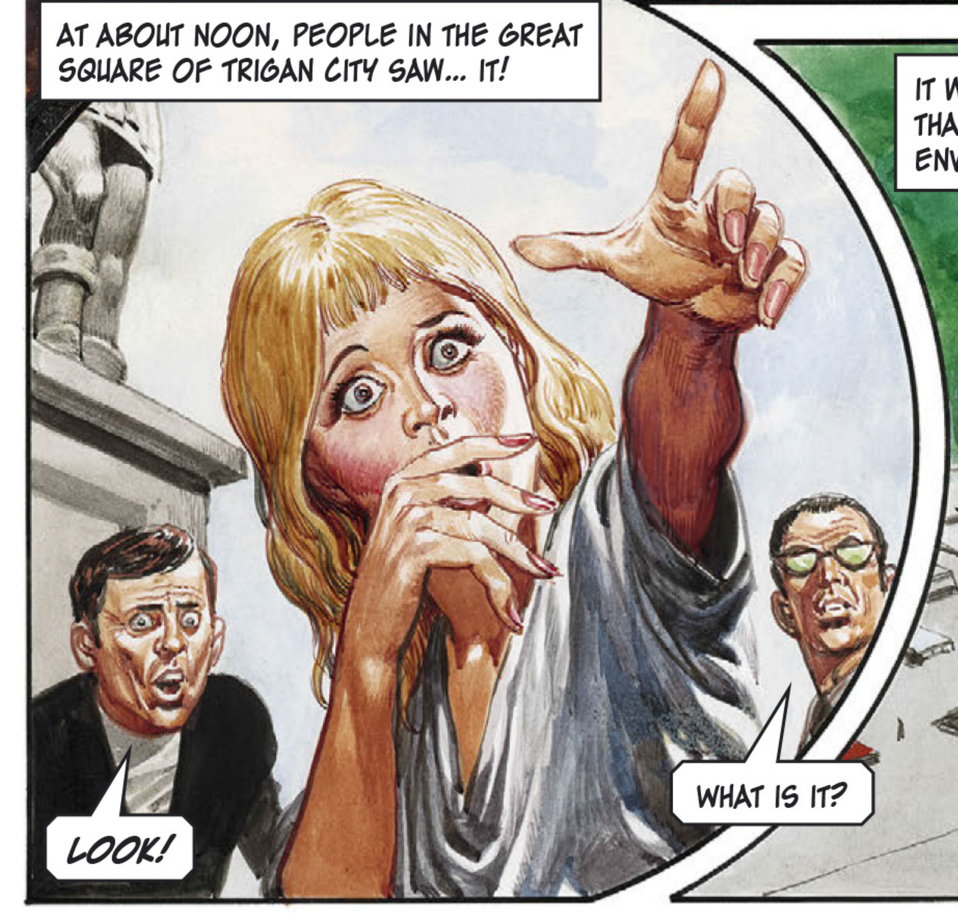
Art by Don Lawrence

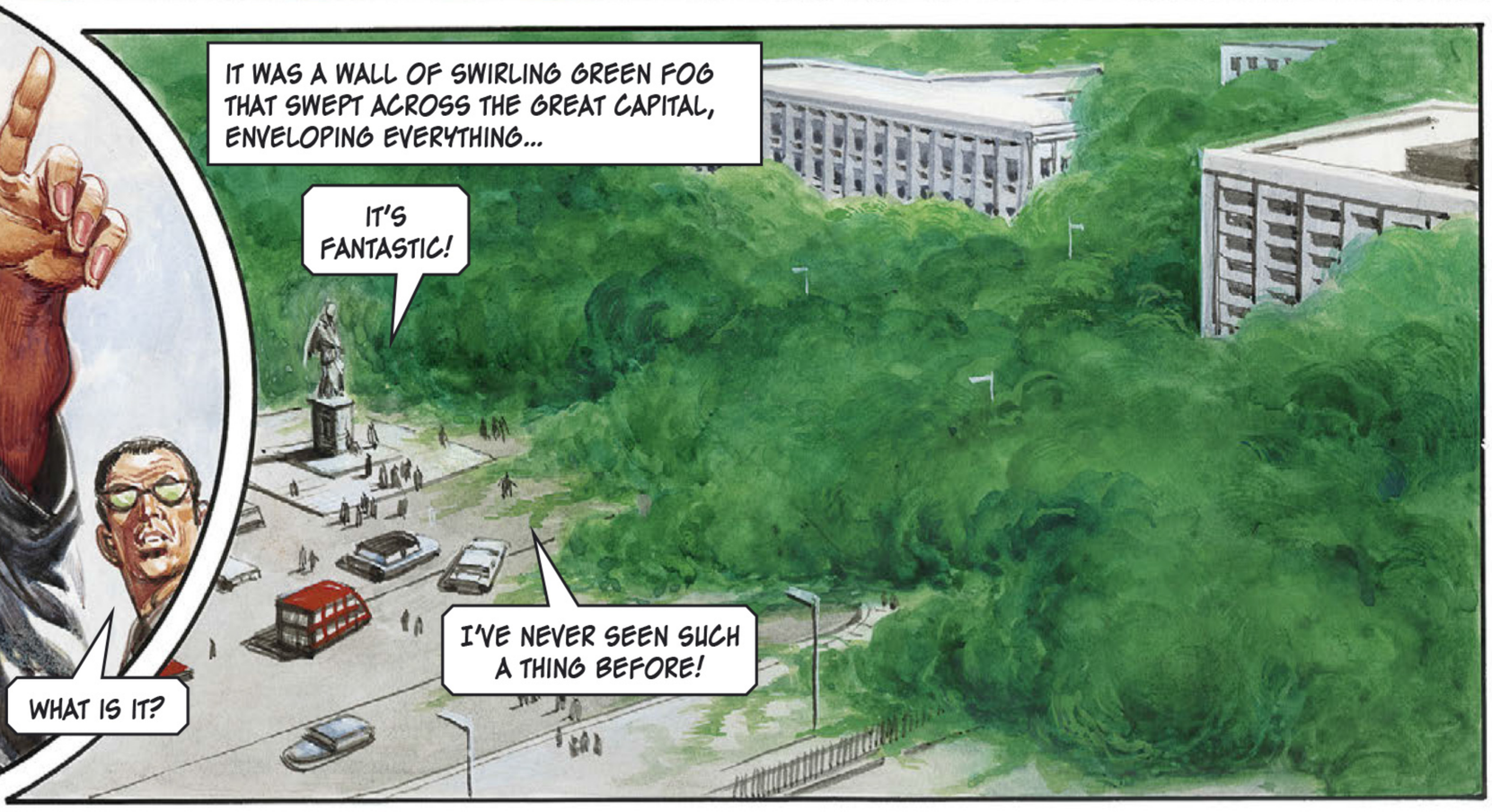

THE BLIND BEGGAR URUZ HAD SAT AT THE BASE OF TRIGO'S STATUE IN THE GREAT SQUARE OF THE CITY FOR AS LONG AS ANYONE COULD REMEMBER. ONE MORNING, JANNO, THE EMPEROR'S NEPHEW, WAS CROSSING THE SQUARE. AS ALWAYS, HE DROPPED A COIN INTO THE BEGGAR'S HAT.
A THOUSAND THANKS, LORD JANNO.

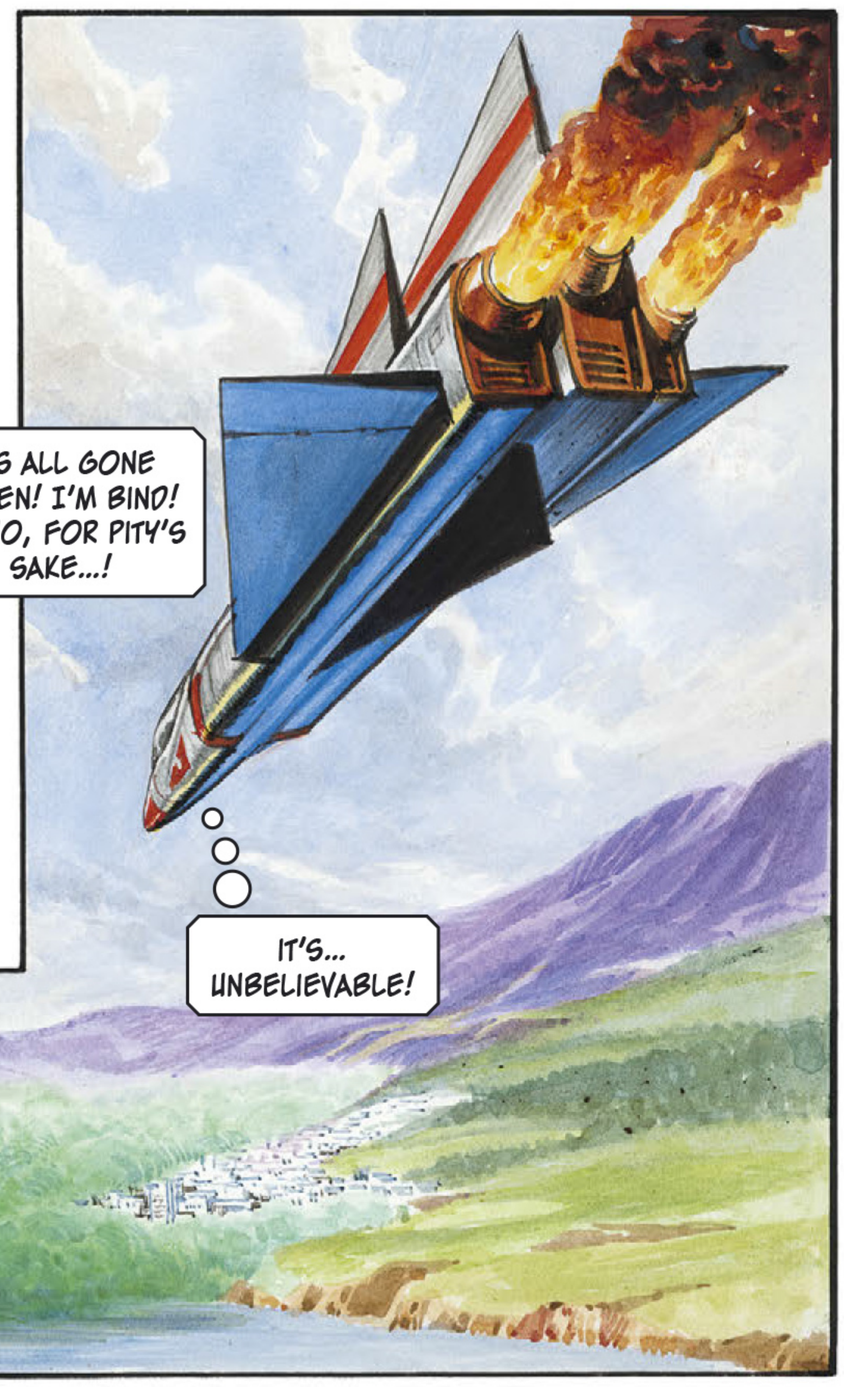
YOU KNEW WHO I WAS! YET I NEVER UTTERED A WORD!
SO YOU THINK THAT I CAN SEE AFTER ALL. BUT YOU ARE WRONG, LORD JANNO. WHY, I KNOW YOU FROM THE SOUND OF YOUR FOOTFALL, FROM THE VERY RUSTLE OF YOUR UNIFORM. MY EARS ARE MY EYES!

CALLING CONTROL. HAVE CLEARED GROUND. YOUR ORDERS, PLEASE.
THE INCIDENT HAD PASSED FROM JANNO'S MIND BY THE TIME HE REACHED THE AIR FLEET BASE, CLIMBED INTO HIS TINY FIGHTER AND TOOK OFF.
LAWRENCE

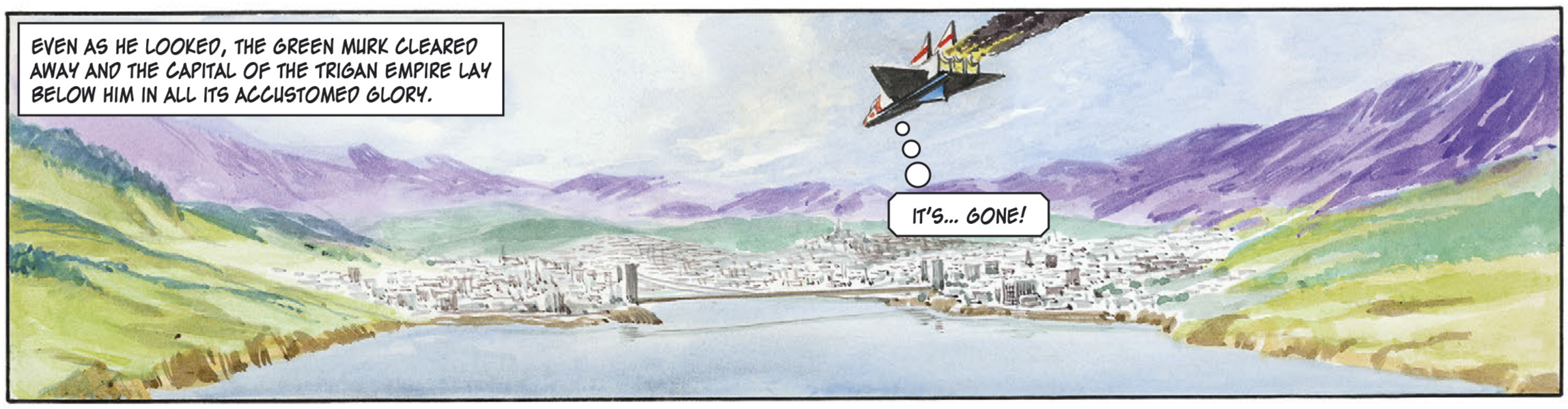

HIS ORDERS TOOK HIM TO THE STRATOSPHERE HIGH ABOVE THE SURFACE OF ELEKTON, PATROLLING THE SKY FRONTIERS OF THE TRIGAN EMPIRE.

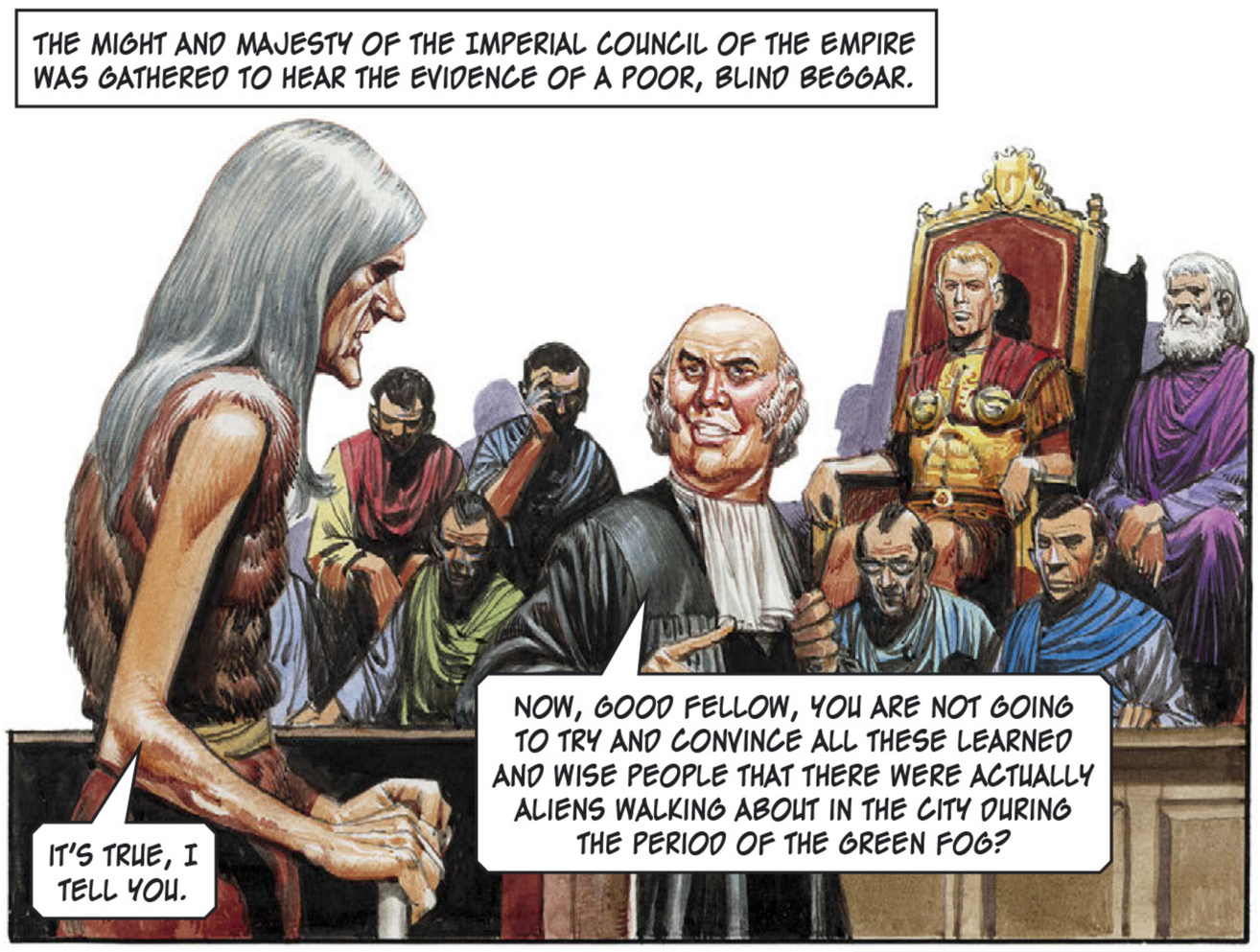

AT ABOUT NOON, PEOPLE IN THE GREAT SQUARE OF TRIGAN CITY SAW... IT!
LOOK!
WHAT IS IT?


IT WAS A WALL OF SWIRLING GREEN FOG THAT SWEPT ACROSS THE GREAT CAPITAL, ENVELOPING EVERYTHING...
IT'S FANTASTIC!
I'VE NEVER SEEN SUCH A THING BEFORE!



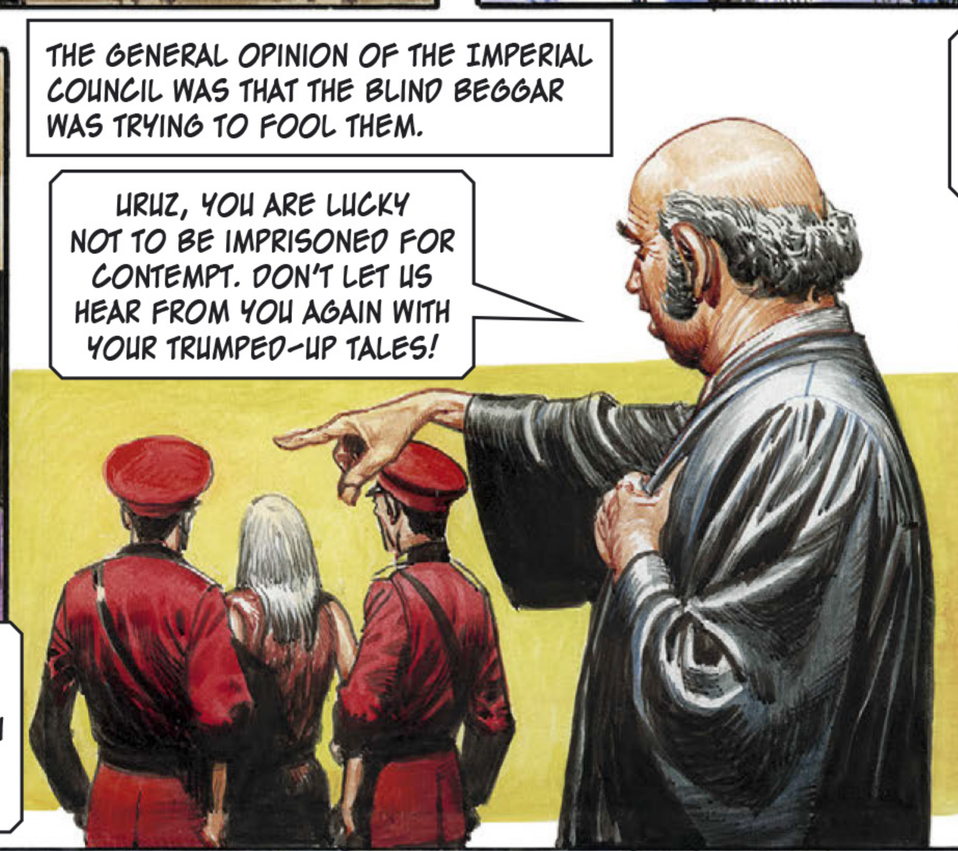
RECEIVING NO REPLY, JANNO BROUGHT HIS CRAFT DOWN IN A SCREAMING DIVE. NEARING THE GROUND, HE SAW THE OMINOUS GREEN CLOUD THAT SHROUDED THE CITY.



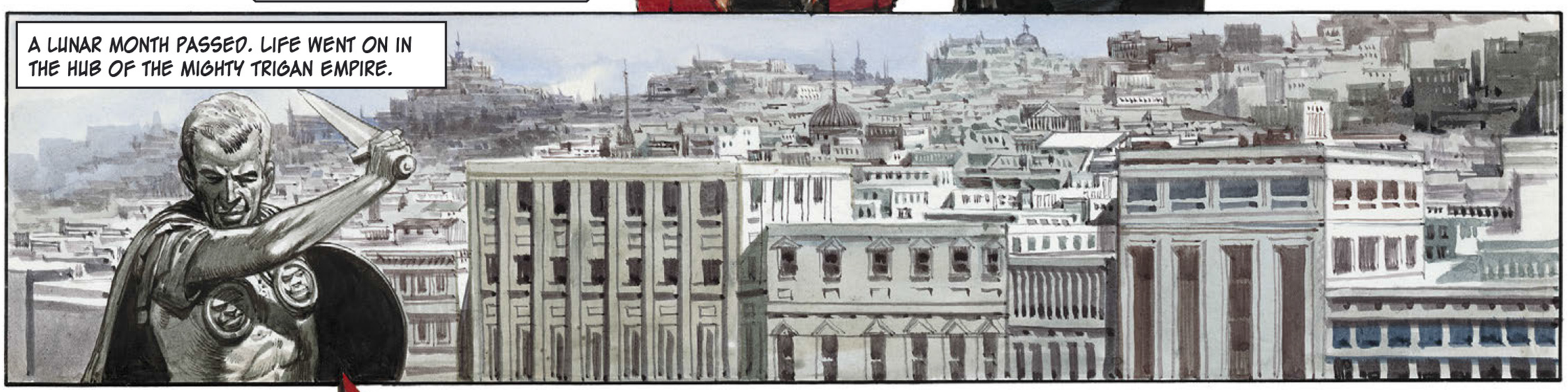

THE MIGHT AND MAJESTY OF THE IMPERIAL COUNCIL OF THE EMPIRE WAS GATHERED TO HEAR THE EVIDENCE OF A POOR, BLIND BEGGAR.
NOW, GOOD FELLOW, YOU ARE NOT GOING TO TRY AND CONVINCE ALL THESE LEARNED AND WISE PEOPLE THAT THERE WERE ACTUALLY ALIENS WALKING ABOUT IN THE CITY DURING THE PERIOD OF THE GREEN FOG?
IT'S TRUE, I TELL YOU.

MY EARS ARE MY EYES AND I HEARD THEM! MANY OF THEM! WALKING IN THE FOG AS SURE FOOTED AS SIGHTED PEOPLE DO IN THE BROAD LIGHT OF DAY-AND THEY WERE DOING EVIL WORK!
WHAT KIND OF EVIL WORK?

URUZ HAD NO ANSWER TO THE LAST QUESTION. THE EMPEROR CONSULTED WITH PERIC, THE WISE SCIENTIST.
DO YOU THINK THIS FELLOW IS TELLING THE TRUTH?
WE HAVE NO WAY OF KNOWING, IMPERIAL MAJESTY. HE MAY BE SINCERE. HE MAY BE MISTAKEN. ON THE OTHER HAND, HE MAY SIMPLY BE SEEKING NOTORIETY.

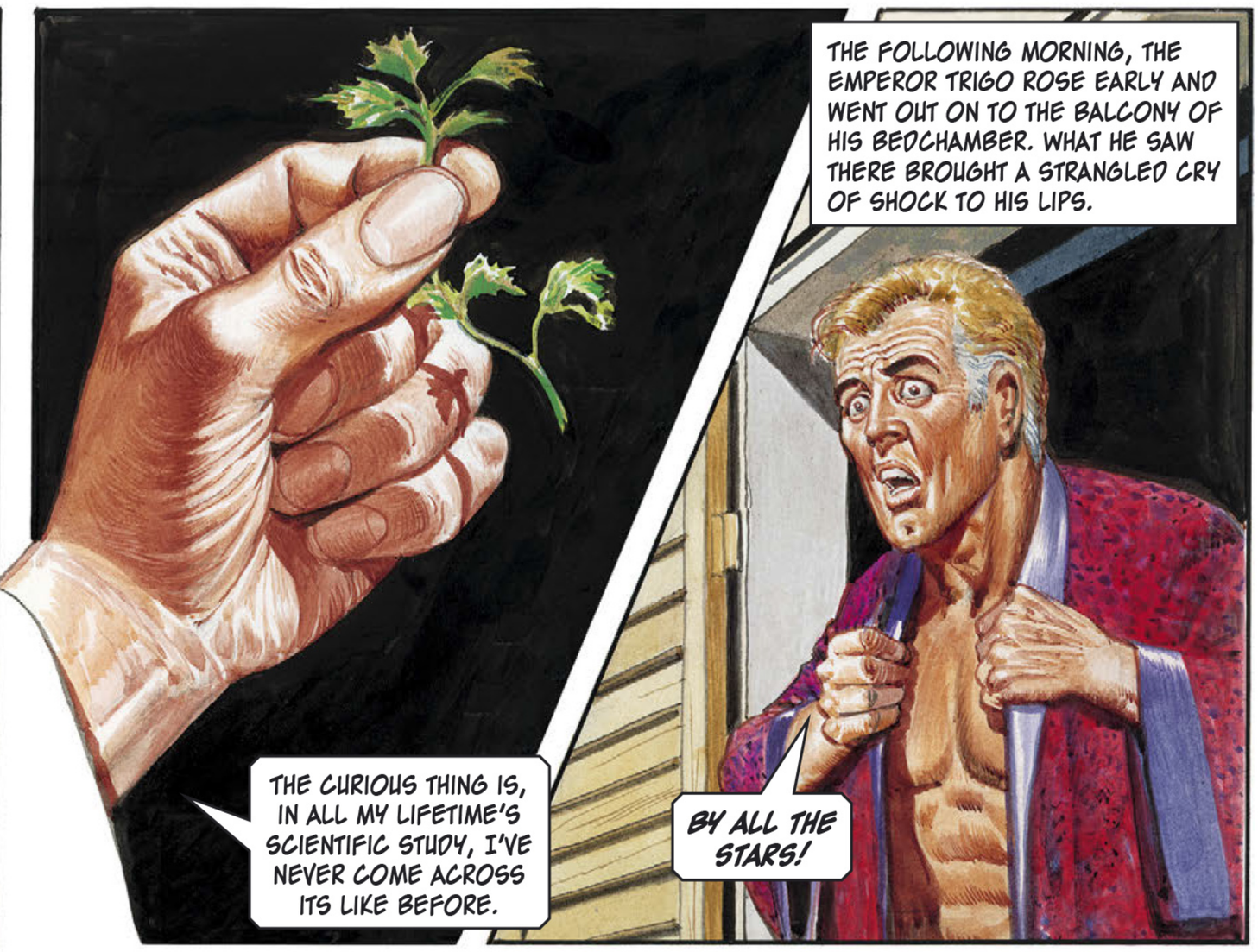

THE GENERAL OPINION OF THE IMPERIAL COUNCIL WAS THAT THE BLIND BEGGAR WAS TRYING TO FOOL THEM.
URUZ, YOU ARE LUCKY NOT TO BE IMPRISONED FOR CONTEMPT. DON'T LET US HEAR FROM YOU AGAIN WITH YOUR TRUMPED-UP TALES!

YOU'LL BE SORRY. YOU'LL HAVE CAUSE TO REMEMBER MY WORDS! GREAT EVIL HAS BEEN DONE IN THIS CITY... GREAT EVIL!

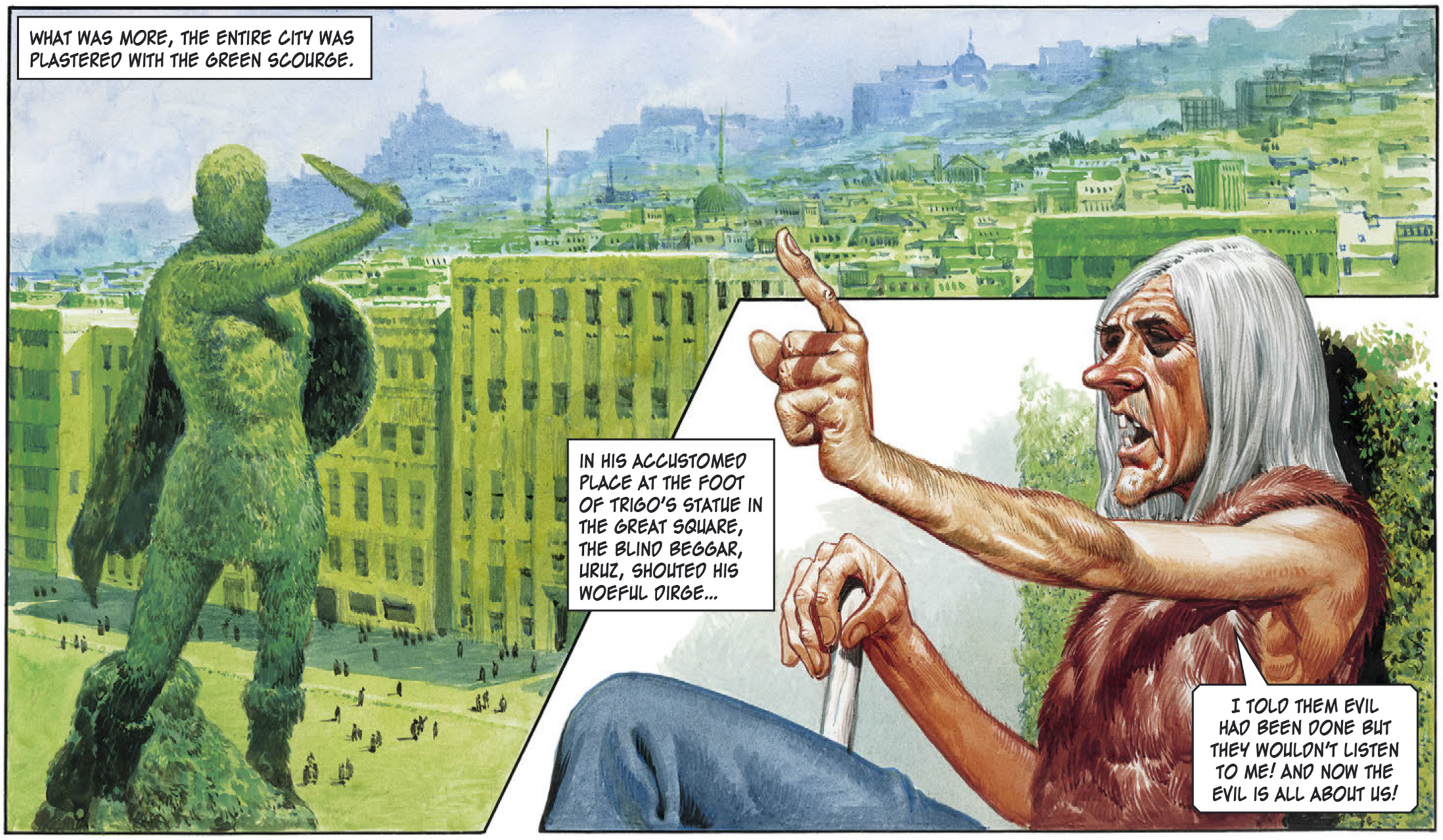

A LUNAR MONTH PASSED. LIFE WENT ON IN THE HUB OF THE MIGHTY TRIGAN EMPIRE.

ONE DAY, JANNO, THE EMPEROR'S NEPHEW, DROVE TO SEE HIS OLD FRIEND PERIC AT THE GREAT SCIENTIST'S VILLA JUST OUTSIDE THE WALLS.

HE FOUND PERIC ABSORBED IN AN UNUSUAL TASK.
WHAT ARE YOU UP TO?
I'M EXAMINING THIS GREEN FUNGUS THAT'S SUDDENLY APPEARED ON MY WALL.


THE CURIOUS THING IS, IN ALL MY LIFETIME'S SCIENTIFIC STUDY, I'VE NEVER COME ACROSS ITS LIKE BEFORE.
THE FOLLOWING MORNING, THE EMPEROR TRIGO ROSE EARLY AND WENT OUT ON TO THE BALCONY OF HIS BEDCHAMBER. WHAT HE SAW THERE BROUGHT A STRANGLED CRY OF SHOCK TO HIS LIPS.
BY ALL THE STARS!

THE STONEWORK OF THE IMPERIAL PALACE WAS HUNG WITH A STRANGE GREEN FUNGUS.
IT'S... UNBELIEVABLE!


WHAT WAS MORE, THE ENTIRE CITY WAS PLASTERED WITH THE GREEN SCOURGE.
IN HIS ACCUSTOMED PLACE AT THE FOOT OF TRIGO'S STATUE IN THE GREAT SQUARE, THE BLIND BEGGAR, URUZ, SHOUTED HIS WOEFUL DIRGE...
I TOLD THEM EVIL HAD BEEN DONE BUT THEY WOULDN'T LISTEN TO ME! AND NOW THE EVIL IS ALL ABOUT US!

THE FUNGUS GREW... AND GREW! PRESENTLY, THE OLDER BUILDINGS BEGAN TO COLLAPSE UNDER THE TREMENDOUS WEIGHT.

THE WHOLE CITY IS FALLING DOWN!

THE GREEN SCOURGE EVEN PENETRATED THE INTERIOR OF BUILDINGS. WITHIN DAYS, THE IMPERIAL ARCHIVE-NERVE CENTRE OF THE TRIGAN ADMINISTRATION-WAS A SHAMBLES.

WE CAN'T GO ON! THE GREEN STUFF IS EVERYWHERE!

THE IMPERIAL COUNCIL MET IN A STATE OF PANIC.

BE SILENT!

GOVERNMENT HAS BECOME IMPOSSIBLE IN THE CITY!

LOKA IS CERTAIN TO INVADE US, KNOWING OUR WEAKNESS!

THERE ARE FOOD RIOTS IN THE STREETS!

THE EMPEROR TRIGO'S VOICE WAS CALM AND COMMANDING.

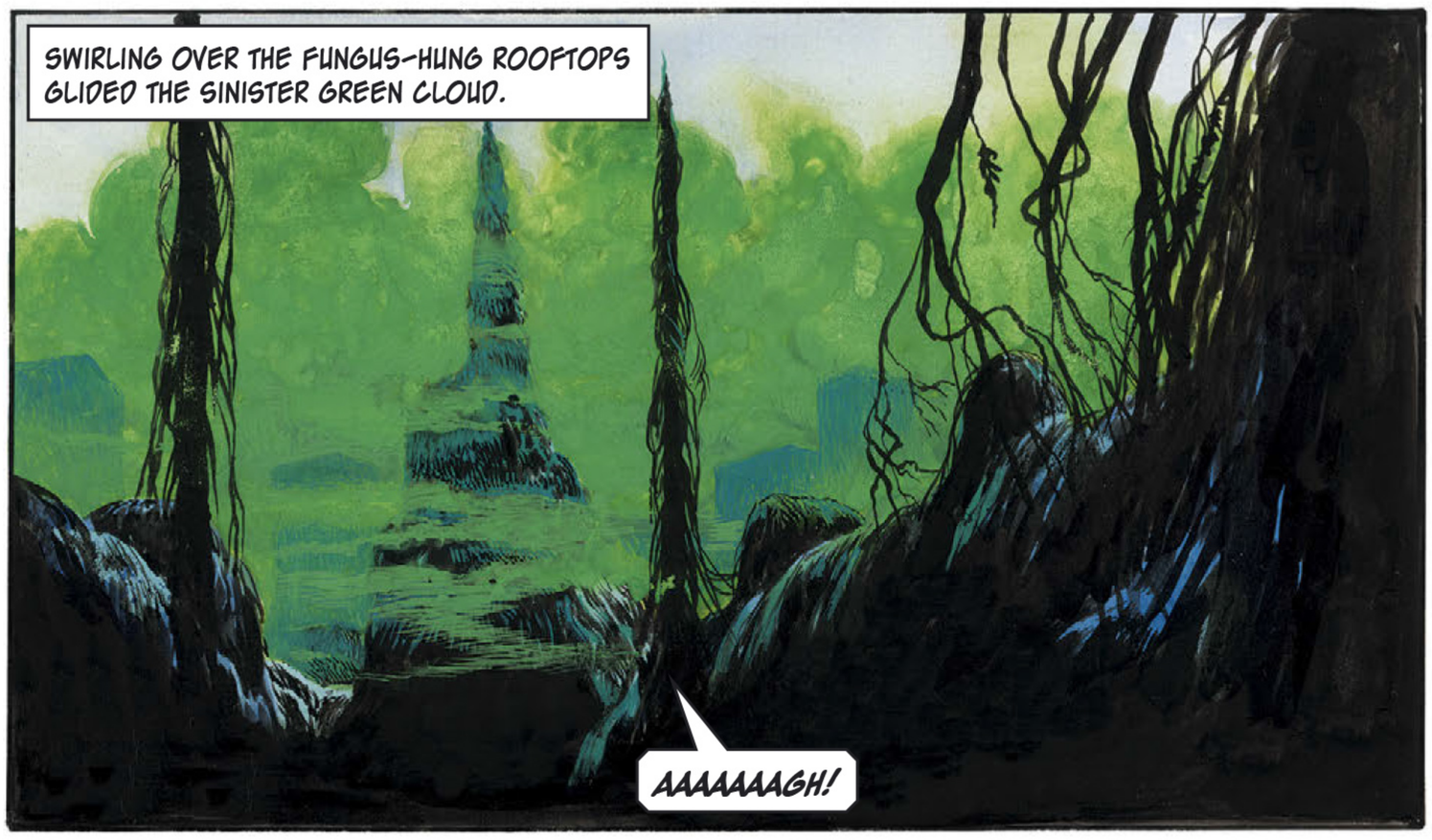
THE CITY WILL BE EVACUATED IMMEDIATELY. THE CAPITAL OF THE EMPIRE WILL BE REMOVED TO THE TOWN OF VORGPASS TILL THE... EMERGENCY... IS OVER.

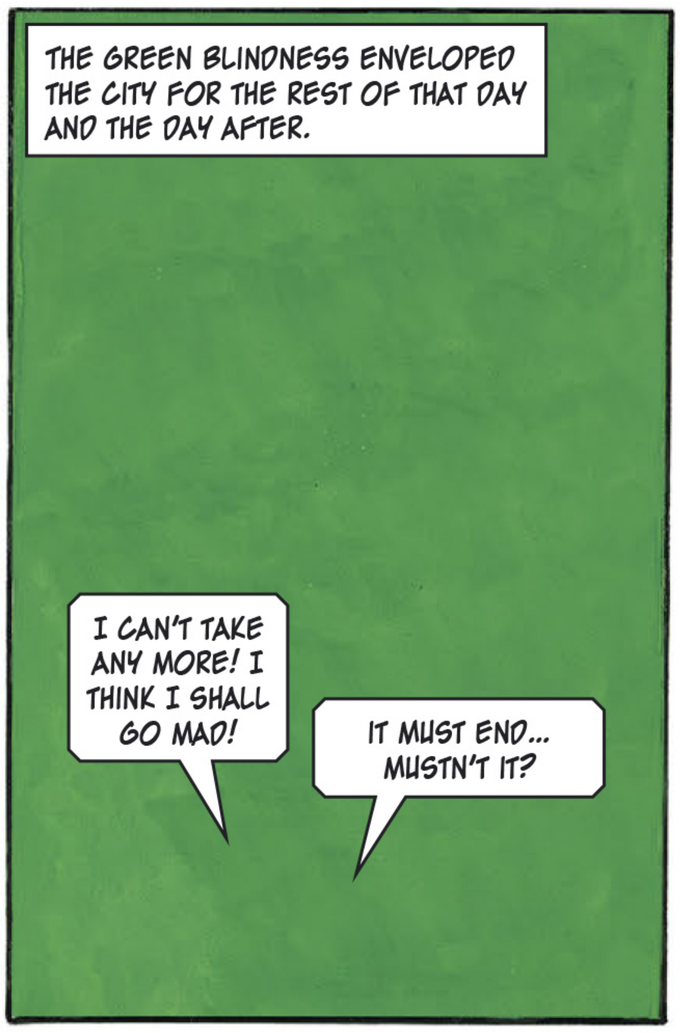
NEWS THAT THE CITY WAS TO BE ABANDONED TO THE GREEN FUNGUS SENT A WAVE OF DESPAIR THROUGH THE POPULATION. GRIM-FACED AND SILENT, THEY TOOK WHAT BELONGINGS THEY COULD CARRY AND FILED OUT THROUGH THE GREEN-CARPETED STREETS.

THE VOICE OF URUZ THE BLIND BEGGAR SOUNDED LIKE A KNELL OF DOOM.

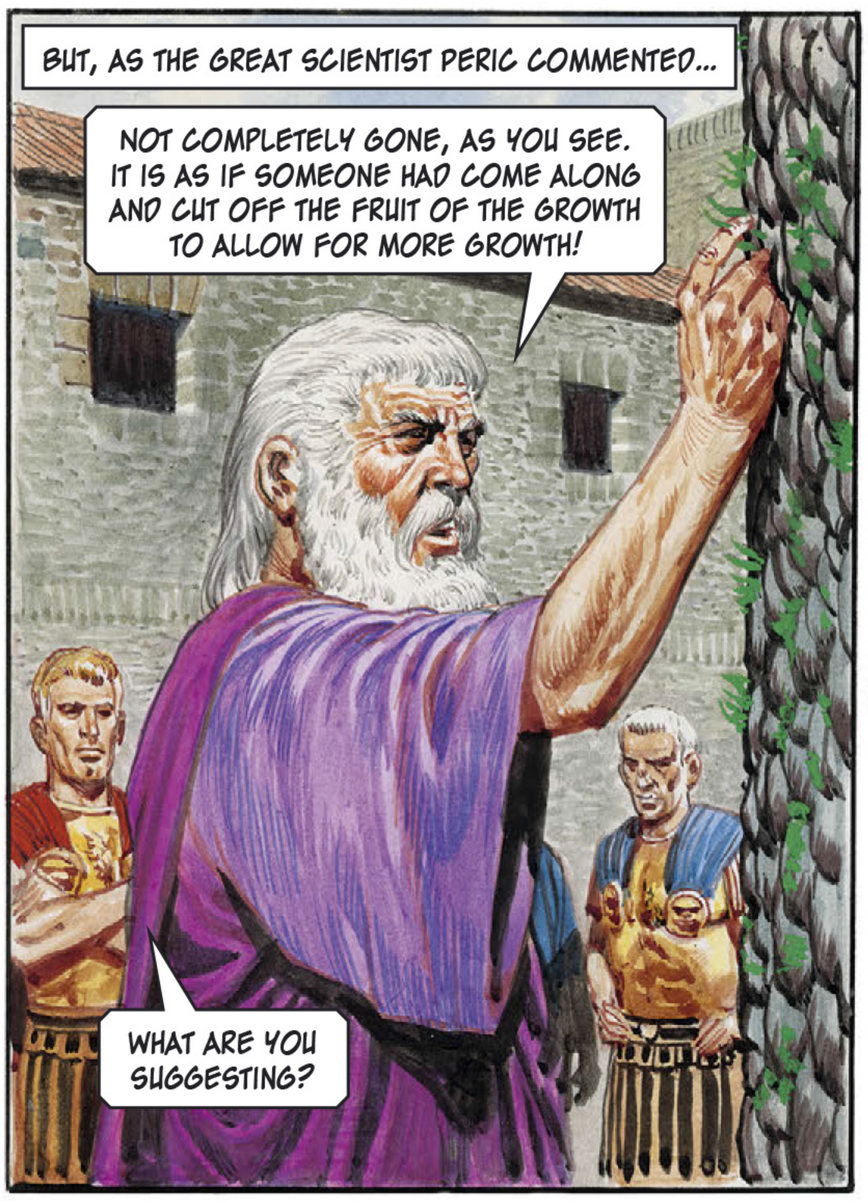
I TOLD THEM BUT THEY WOULDN'T LISTEN! I WARNED THEM THAT EVIL HAD BEEN DONE!

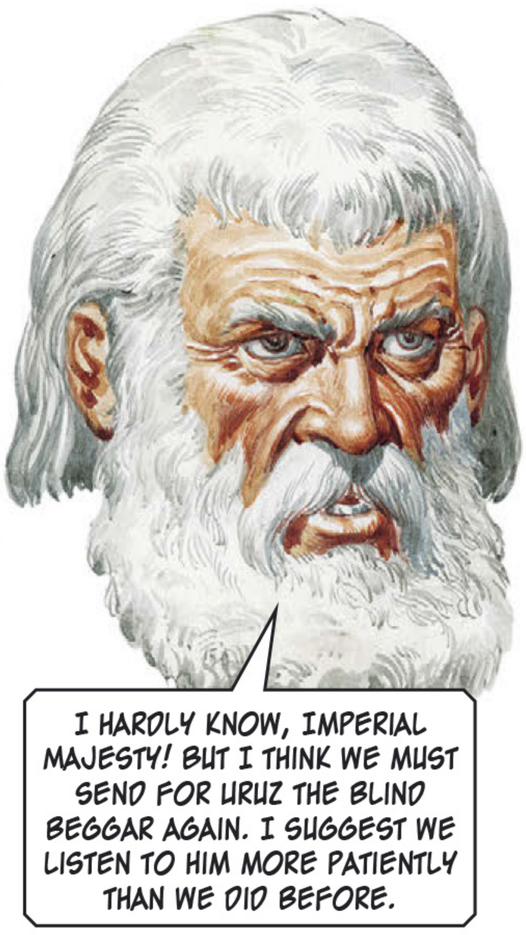
BUT BEFORE THE EVACUATION COULD BE COMPLETED, IT HAPPENED AGAIN.
THE GREEN FOG! IT'S COME BACK!

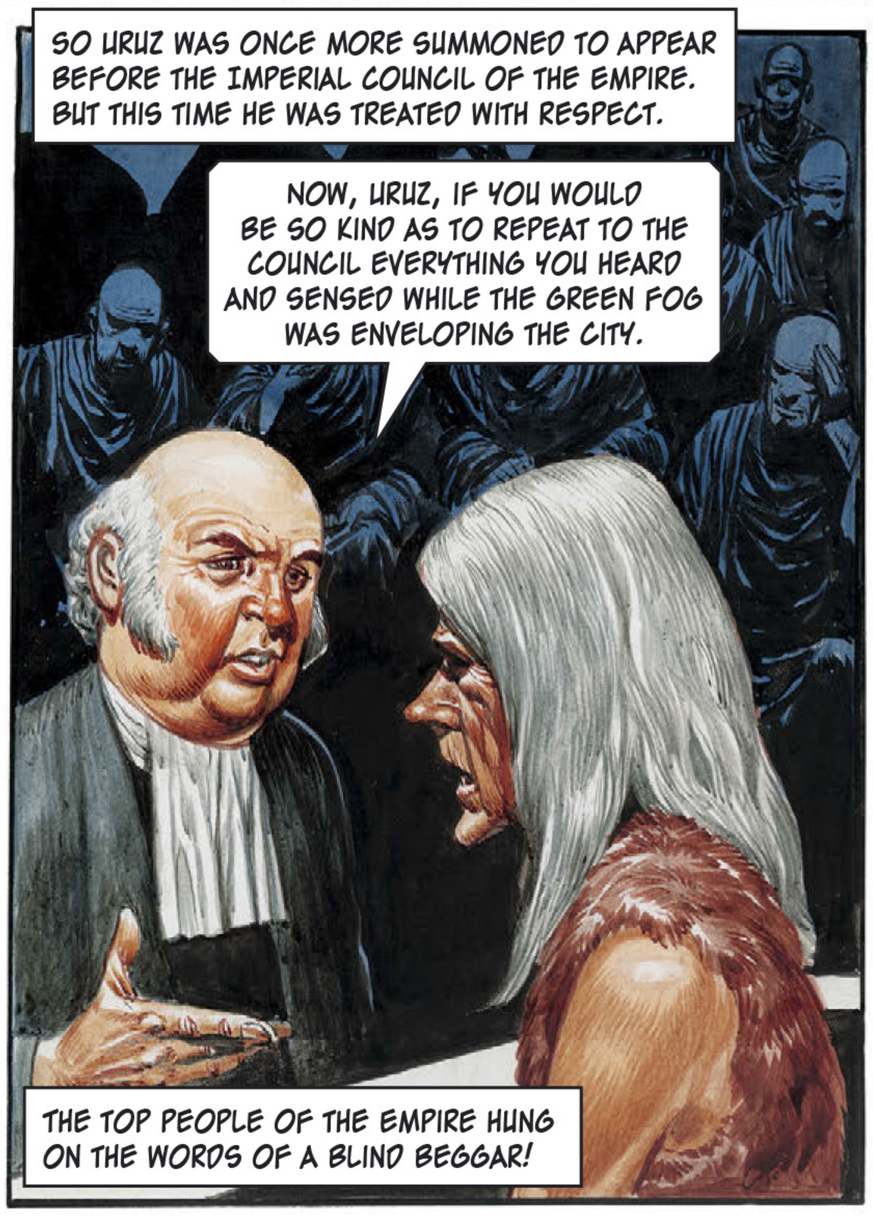

SWIRLING OVER THE FUNGUS-HUNG ROOFTOPS GLIDED THE SINISTER GREEN CLOUD.
AAAAAAAGH!


THE GREEN BLINDNESS ENVELOPED THE CITY FOR THE REST OF THAT DAY AND THE DAY AFTER.
I CAN'T TAKE ANY MORE! I THINK I SHALL GO MAD!
IT MUST END... MUSTN'T IT?

THE GREEN FOG CLEARED AS QUICKLY AS IT HAD COME. AND THE WEARY AND FRIGHTENED PEOPLE LOOKED ABOUT THEM.
THE FUNGUS HAS GONE!
THANK THE STARS!

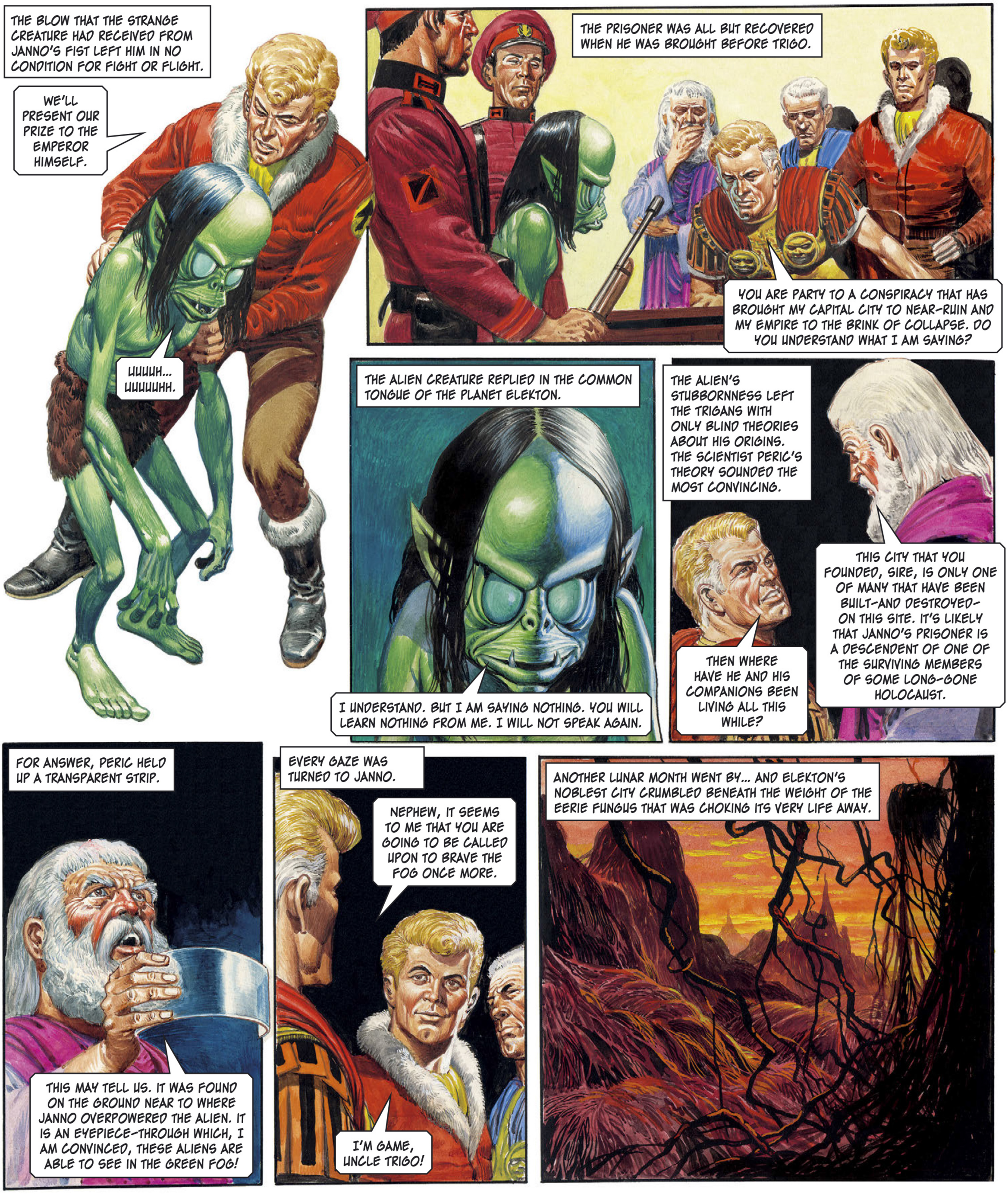

BUT, AS THE GREAT SCIENTIST PERIC COMMENTED...
NOT COMPLETELY GONE, AS YOU SEE. IT IS AS IF SOMEONE HAD COME ALONG AND CUT OFF THE FRUIT OF THE GROWTH TO ALLOW FOR MORE GROWTH!
WHAT ARE YOU SUGGESTING?

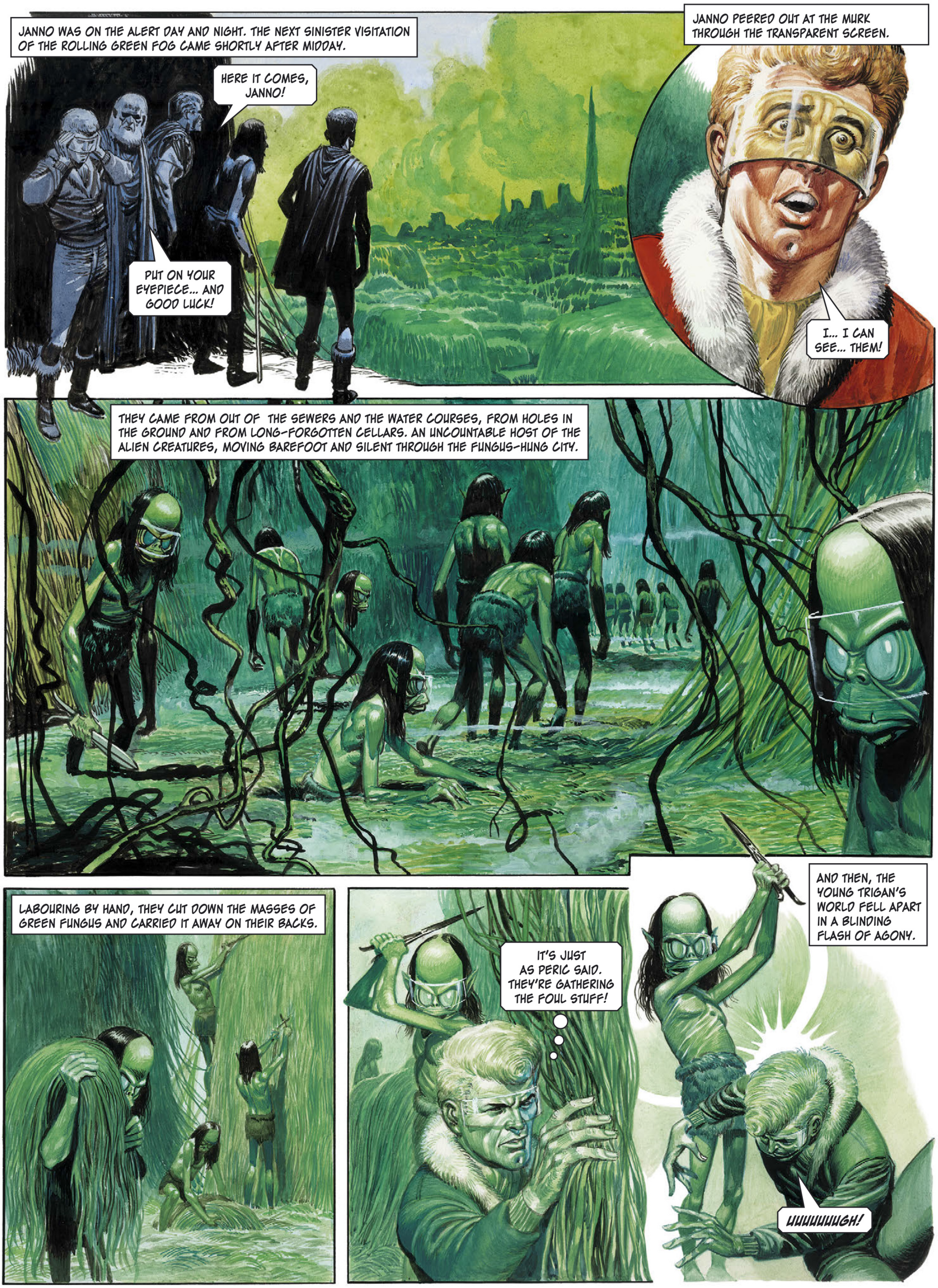

I HARDLY KNOW, IMPERIAL MAJESTY! BUT I THINK WE MUST SEND FOR URUZ THE BLIND BEGGAR AGAIN. I SUGGEST WE LISTEN TO HIM MORE PATIENTLY THAN WE DID BEFORE.


SO URUZ WAS ONCE MORE SUMMONED TO APPEAR BEFORE THE IMPERIAL COUNCIL OF THE EMPIRE. BUT THIS TIME HE WAS TREATED WITH RESPECT.
NOW, URUZ, IF YOU WOULD BE SO KIND AS TO REPEAT TO THE COUNCIL EVERYTHING YOU HEARD AND SENSED WHILE THE GREEN FOG WAS ENVELOPING THE CITY.
THE TOP PEOPLE OF THE EMPIRE HUNG ON THE WORDS OF A BLIND BEGGAR!

GUIDED BY HIS QUESTIONS, URUZ TOLD OF ALL THAT HE HAD HEARD AND SENSED DURING THE PERIODS OF GREEN FOG.
AND YOU SAY THESE ALIEN BEINGS WALK THE STREETS?
IN THEIR THOUSANDS. AND ALL OF THEM... WORKING.
WORKING AT WHAT, MAY I ASK?
COLLECTING THE GREEN FUNGUS!
AFTERWARDS, THE GREAT SCIENTIST PERIC GAVE HIS OPINION TO THE EMPEROR.
URUZ'S EVIDENCE TALLIES WITH THE FACTS. I TELL YOU THAT WHEN THE FUNGUS HAS GROWN TO MATURITY AGAIN, THE GREEN FOG WILL COME BACK AND THE FUNGUS WILL BE GATHERED ONCE MORE.
THIS GREEN FUNGUS HAS TURNED ELEKTON'S MIGHTIEST CITY INTO A SHAMBLES AND REDUCED THE EMPIRE TO CHAOS! IT CAN'T BE ALLOWED TO CONTINUE! WHO ARE THESE ALIEN BEINGS?
TO FIND OUT, IMPERIAL MAJESTY, WE MUST CAPTURE ONE OF THEM! AND WITH YOUR PERMISSION I HAVE A PLAN...
LATER, URUZ WAS SUMMONED TO TRIGO'S STUDY.
I THINK YOU KNOW LORD JANNO?
OF COURSE. DOESN'T HE DROP A COIN INTO MY HAT EVERY TIME HE PASSES MY PITCH IN THE GREAT SQUARE?
FROM NOW ON, URUZ, YOU WILL NOT LEAVE JANNO'S SIDE, DAY OR NIGHT. DO YOU UNDERSTAND?
COMPANION TO A MEMBER OF THE IMPERIAL FAMILY! MY, I HAVE COME UP IN THE WORLD—AND ME A POOR BLIND BEGGAR!
IN THE LUNAR MONTH THAT FOLLOWED, JANNO HAD A CONSTANT COMPANION.
MANY'S THE TIME I'VE HEARD YOU SCREECHING PAST AND FOLKS HAVE SAID "THERE GOES LORD JANNO TRYING TO BREAK HIS NECK AGAIN." BUT I NEVER THOUGHT I'D BE IN HERE WITH YOU.
OH, SHUT UP OR BELT UP—ONE THING OR THE OTHER!

AS PERIC HAD PREDICTED, THE FUNGUS MULTIPLIED UNTIL IT HAD BECOME ALMOST A FAMILIAR SIGHT.
YOU CERTAINLY KNOW HOW TO ENJOY LIFE, URUZ.
IT'S BAD ENOUGH BEING BLIND AND POOR, SIR. THERE'S NO POINT IN BEING MISERABLE AS WELL. MIND YOU, THIS IS A GREAT IMPROVEMENT ON BEGGING FOR COINS IN THE GREAT SQUARE!
ONE FATEFUL MORNING–IT CAME!
THE GREEN FOG! IT'S HERE AGAIN, URUZ!
SLOWLY, INEXORABLY, THE ALMOST ABANDONED CITY – HEART OF THE TRIGAN EMPIRE – WAS SWALLOWED UP.
REMEMBER... DON'T STRAY FROM MY SIDE! TELL ME EVERYTHING YOU SENSE OR HEAR. AND LET ME KNOW AS SOON AS ONE OF THOSE ALIEN BEINGS COMES WITHIN REACH.
YOU CAN RELY ON ME, SIR.
THE LONG DAY CREPT SLOWLY PAST. JANNO WAITED, EVERY NERVE STRETCHED TO SNAPPING POINT. AND THEN–IT HAPPENED!
ONE OF THEM'S CLOSE TO YOU!
YES! I'VE GOT HIM!
AAAAAAAEEHH!
WHEN THE FOG CLEARED AWAY, JANNO AND URUZ STEPPED OUT OF THEIR HIDING PLACE AND JANNO LOOKED DOWN AT HIS VICTIM.
BY ALL THE STARS!

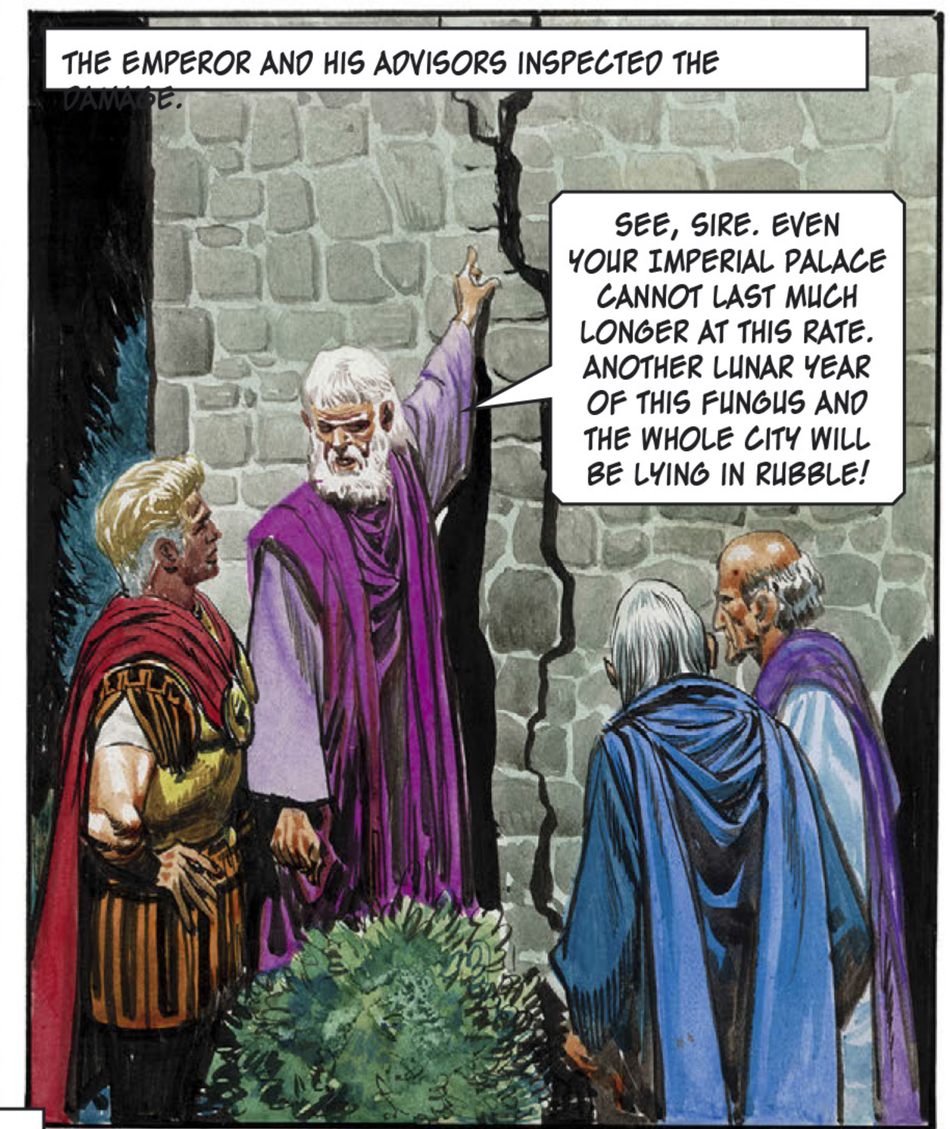

THE BLOW THAT THE STRANGE CREATURE HAD RECEIVED FROM JANNO'S FIST LEFT HIM IN NO CONDITION FOR FIGHT OR FLIGHT.
WE'LL PRESENT OUR PRIZE TO THE EMPEROR HIMSELF.
UUUUH... UUUUUUHH.
THE PRISONER WAS ALL BUT RECOVERED WHEN HE WAS BROUGHT BEFORE TRIGO.
YOU ARE PARTY TO A CONSPIRACY THAT HAS BROUGHT MY CAPITAL CITY TO NEAR-RUIN AND MY EMPIRE TO THE BRINK OF COLLAPSE. DO YOU UNDERSTAND WHAT I AM SAYING?
THE ALIEN CREATURE REPLIED IN THE COMMON TONGUE OF THE PLANET ELEKTON.
I UNDERSTAND. BUT I AM SAYING NOTHING. YOU WILL LEARN NOTHING FROM ME. I WILL NOT SPEAK AGAIN.
THE ALIEN'S STUBBORNNESS LEFT THE TRIGANS WITH ONLY BLIND THEORIES ABOUT HIS ORIGINS. THE SCIENTIST PERIC'S THEORY SOUNDED THE MOST CONVINCING.
THIS CITY THAT YOU FOUNDED, SIRE, IS ONLY ONE OF MANY THAT HAVE BEEN BUILT-AND DESTROYED-ON THIS SITE. IT'S LIKELY THAT JANNO'S PRISONER IS A DESCENDENT OF ONE OF THE SURVIVING MEMBERS OF SOME LONG-GONE HOLOCAUST.
THEN WHERE HAVE HE AND HIS COMPANIONS BEEN LIVING ALL THIS WHILE?
FOR ANSWER, PERIC HELD UP A TRANSPARENT STRIP.
THIS MAY TELL US. IT WAS FOUND ON THE GROUND NEAR TO WHERE JANNO OVERPOWERED THE ALIEN. IT IS AN EYEPIECE-THROUGH WHICH, I AM CONVINCED, THESE ALIENS ARE ABLE TO SEE IN THE GREEN FOG!
EVERY GAZE WAS TURNED TO JANNO.
NEPHEW, IT SEEMS TO ME THAT YOU ARE GOING TO BE CALLED UPON TO BRAVE THE FOG ONCE MORE.
I'M GAME, UNCLE TRIGO!
ANOTHER LUNAR MONTH WENT BY... AND ELEKTON'S NOBLEST CITY CRUMBLED BENEATH THE WEIGHT OF THE EERIE FUNGUS THAT WAS CHOKING ITS VERY LIFE AWAY.


JANNO WAS ON THE ALERT DAY AND NIGHT. THE NEXT SINISTER VISITATION OF THE ROLLING GREEN FOG CAME SHORTLY AFTER MIDDAY.
HERE IT COMES, JANNO!
PUT ON YOUR EYEPIECE... AND GOOD LUCK!
JANNO PEERED OUT AT THE MURK THROUGH THE TRANSPARENT SCREEN.
I... I CAN SEE... THEM!
THEY CAME FROM OUT OF THE SEWERS AND THE WATER COURSES, FROM HOLES IN THE GROUND AND FROM LONG-FORGOTTEN CELLARS. AN UNCOUNTABLE HOST OF THE ALIEN CREATURES, MOVING BAREFOOT AND SILENT THROUGH THE FUNGUS-HUNG CITY.
LABOURING BY HAND, THEY CUT DOWN THE MASSES OF GREEN FUNGUS AND CARRIED IT AWAY ON THEIR BACKS.
IT'S JUST AS PERIC SAID. THEY'RE GATHERING THE FOUL STUFF!
AND THEN, THE YOUNG TRIGAN'S WORLD FELL APART IN A BLINDING FLASH OF AGONY.
UUUUUUUGH!

WITH THE GREEN GLOOM STILL SWIRLING ABOUT THEM, SOME OF THE ALIEN CREATURES CARRIED THE STRICKEN TRIGAN TO THE ENTRANCE OF A DISUSED SEWER.
FAR BELOW THE STREETS OF THE CAPITAL CITY, THEY BORE THEIR SENSELESS BURDEN THROUGH LONG ABANDONED CORRIDORS HEWN OUT OF ANCIENT ROCK.
PRESENTLY, THEY EMERGED IN A VAST HALL THAT RESEMBLED SOME KIND OF BARBARIC TEMPLE TO FORGOTTEN GODS. THERE, JANNO'S CAPTORS LAID HIM AT THE FEET OF HE WHO WAS THEIR LEADER.
LATER, JANNO OPENED HIS EYES TO STARE ABOUT HIM IN AWE AND WONDERMENT. WAS HE DREAMING? WERE THOSE VOICES?
THE TALL FIGURE LOOMING OVER JANNO ADDRESSED HIM IN THE COMMON TONGUE OF THE PLANET ELEKTON...
SO! YOU HAVE RECOVERED.
WHO ARE YOU?
WE ARE THE DESCENDANTS OF THE DRYAKS, AN ANCIENT AND CIVILISED PEOPLE WHO INHABITED THIS AREA LONG BEFORE THE TRIGANS WERE DREAMED OF... LONG BEFORE EVEN THE VORG PEOPLES FROM WHOM THE TRIGANS ARE DESCENDED WERE DREAMED OF...
THE LEADER CONTINUED AND JANNO SAW IT ALL IN HIS MIND'S EYE...
"...ON THESE HILLS, UPON WHICH NOW STANDS TRIGAN CITY, ONCE STOOD A CITY MORE FAIR AND SPLENDID THAN THIS PLANET HAS EVER KNOWN SINCE. A CITY FAMED THROUGHOUT ELEKTON FOR THE WISDOM AND SPLENDOUR OF ITS INHABITANTS!"

"TRAGICALLY, THAT SPLENDOUR WAS DOOMED TO EXTINCTION. FROM OUT OF THE SETTING SUNS THEY CAME—THE BARBARIANS!"
DEATH TO THE DRYAKS!
TRAMPLE THEM AND THEIR CITY TO THE DUST!
DON LAWRENCE
"THE DRYAKS, SOFTENED BY A LONG AGE OF PEACE, WERE NO MATCH FOR THE INVADERS. SUCH AS ESCAPED THE HOLOCAUST TOOK REFUGE IN THE UNDERGROUND SEWERS AND WATER-COURSES."
"WITH NO OTHER MEANS OF SUSTENANCE, THE WRETCHED SURVIVORS WERE FORCED TO EAT THE RANK-TASTING FUNGUS THAT GREW FROM THE UNDERGROUND ROCKS."
I'M HUNGRY. I WANT SOME REAL FOOD!
EAT, MY DARLING—EAT AND LIVE!
"BY A MIRACLE, THE FUNGUS PROVIDED A PERFECT BALANCED DIET. UNABLE TO VENTURE FORTH INTO THE SUNLIGHT, THE SURVIVORS DECIDED TO MAKE THEIR UNDERGROUND WORLD HABITABLE. THEY BUILT HOUSES AND TEMPLES TO THEIR GODS."
THE SPEAKER PAUSED IN HIS TALE AND JANNO INTERPOSED A QUESTION.
ARE YOU TRYING TO TELL ME THAT THE DRYAKS AND YOU, THEIR DESCENDANTS, HAVE BEEN DOWN HERE ALL THOSE LONG AGES BEFORE RECORDED HISTORY?
YES! AND NEVER STIRRED FORTH INTO THE SUNLIGHT DURING ALL THOSE COUNTLESS CENTURIES.
NOT UNTIL YOU ACCURSED TRIGANS SOUGHT TO DESTROY US! IN RETURN FOR WHICH, WE WILL DESTROY YOUR CITY—AND YOU WITH IT!

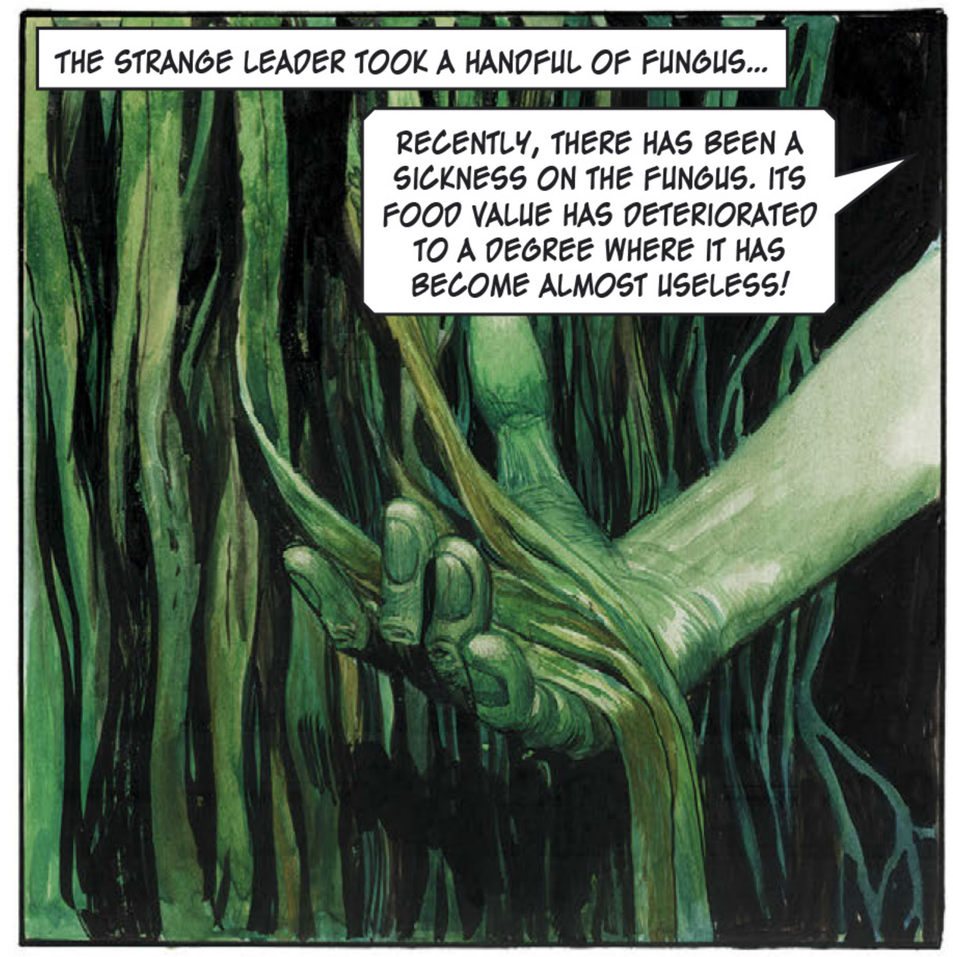
IN TRIGAN CITY, THE GREEN FOG CLEARED AWAY AS QUICKLY AS IT HAD COME. DAZED AND SHOCKED, THE PEOPLE GAZED AT THE DEVASTATION THAT WAS BEING WROUGHT UPON THE CAPITAL.
THE FUNGUS HAS BEEN GATHERED AGAIN!
BUT IT WILL GROW AGAIN IN NO TIME!

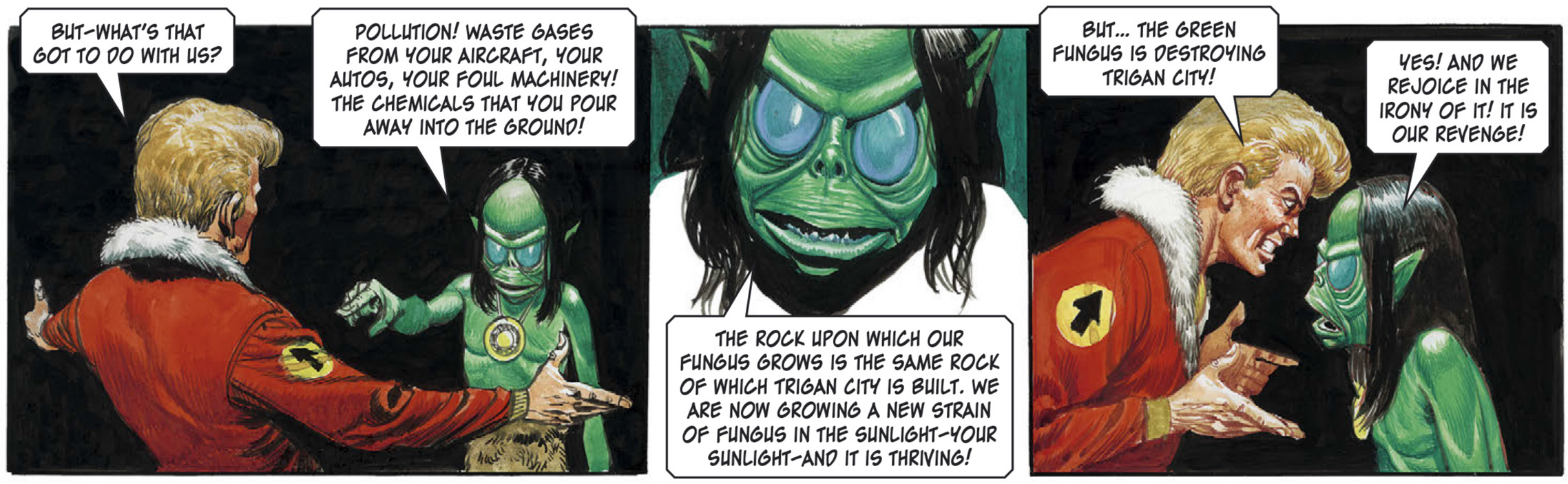

THE EMPEROR AND HIS ADVISORS INSPECTED THE DAMAGE.
SEE, SIRE. EVEN YOUR IMPERIAL PALACE CANNOT LAST MUCH LONGER AT THIS RATE. ANOTHER LUNAR YEAR OF THIS FUNGUS AND THE WHOLE CITY WILL BE LYING IN RUBBLE!

ANOTHER GRAVE MATTER LAY HEAVILY ON TRIGO'S MIND...
AND WHAT OF MY NEPHEW?
I FEAR, SIRE, THAT JANNO MAY WELL HAVE MET HIS END IN THE SERVICE OF THE STATE!

BUT JANNO LIVED. FAR BELOW THE CITY, HE WAS CONFRONTING THE LEADER OF HIS CAPTORS.
YOU SAY THE TRIGANS ARE TRYING TO DESTROY YOU! WHY, THE TRIGANS DO NOT EVEN KNOW YOU EXIST!
I WILL SHOW YOU WHAT I MEAN. COME...!

IN A GREAT CAVERN NEARBY, JANNO LOOKED UP TO SEE MASSIVE CLUMPS OF THE FAMILIAR GROWTH HANGING FROM THE ROCKY WALLS.
THE GREEN FUNGUS!
AYE! THE MIRACLE FOOD THAT HAS SUSTAINED OUR PEOPLE FOR COUNTLESS GENERATIONS!


THE STRANGE LEADER TOOK A HANDFUL OF FUNGUS...
RECENTLY, THERE HAS BEEN A SICKNESS ON THE FUNGUS. ITS FOOD VALUE HAS DETERIORATED TO A DEGREE WHERE IT HAS BECOME ALMOST USELESS!



LATER, IN ANOTHER VAST CAVERN, JANNO WAS SHOWN ANOTHER SECRET...

BEHOLD-THE MEANS BY WHICH WE CAST A FOG OF BLINDNESS OVER TRIGAN CITY TO CONCEAL OUR ACTIVITIES...

WITH THE AID OF A LEVER, THE HUGE BOULDER WAS LIFTED SLIGHTLY. INSTANTLY, A RUSHING MASS OF GREEN GAS ISSUED FROM THE HOLE BENEATH AND SOARED UP ON HIGH.

IT IS A VOLCANIC GAS THAT WE HARNESS TO OUR USE! RELEASED, IT SEEPS TO THE CITY BY WAY OF UNDERGROUND CORRIDORS, ANCIENT WATER-COURSES, SEWERS, CELLARS-AND REMAINS THERE, BLINDING EVERYONE TILL THE SUNLIGHT DESTROYS IT!

THE GREEN FOG!

JANNO HAD HEARD ALL HE NEEDED TO KNOW. WITH ONE BOUND, THE YOUNG TRIGAN MADE HIS BID FOR FREEDOM!

HAH!

UUUUUUH!

HIS WAY WAS CLEAR!

AFTER HIM! HE MUST NOT ESCAPE!

AHEAD OF JANNO WERE TWO BRAWNY FIGURES!

HE BURST PAST THEM, USING THEIR COMBINED STRENGTHS TO CONFOUND THEM.
AAAAAAGH!
UUUUUUHH!

THEN–DAYLIGHT AHEAD!

HE EMERGED IN THE WARMTH OF THE TWIN SUNS OF ELEKTON.
I MUST BEAR THIS INFORMATION TO THE EMPEROR IMMEDIATELY!

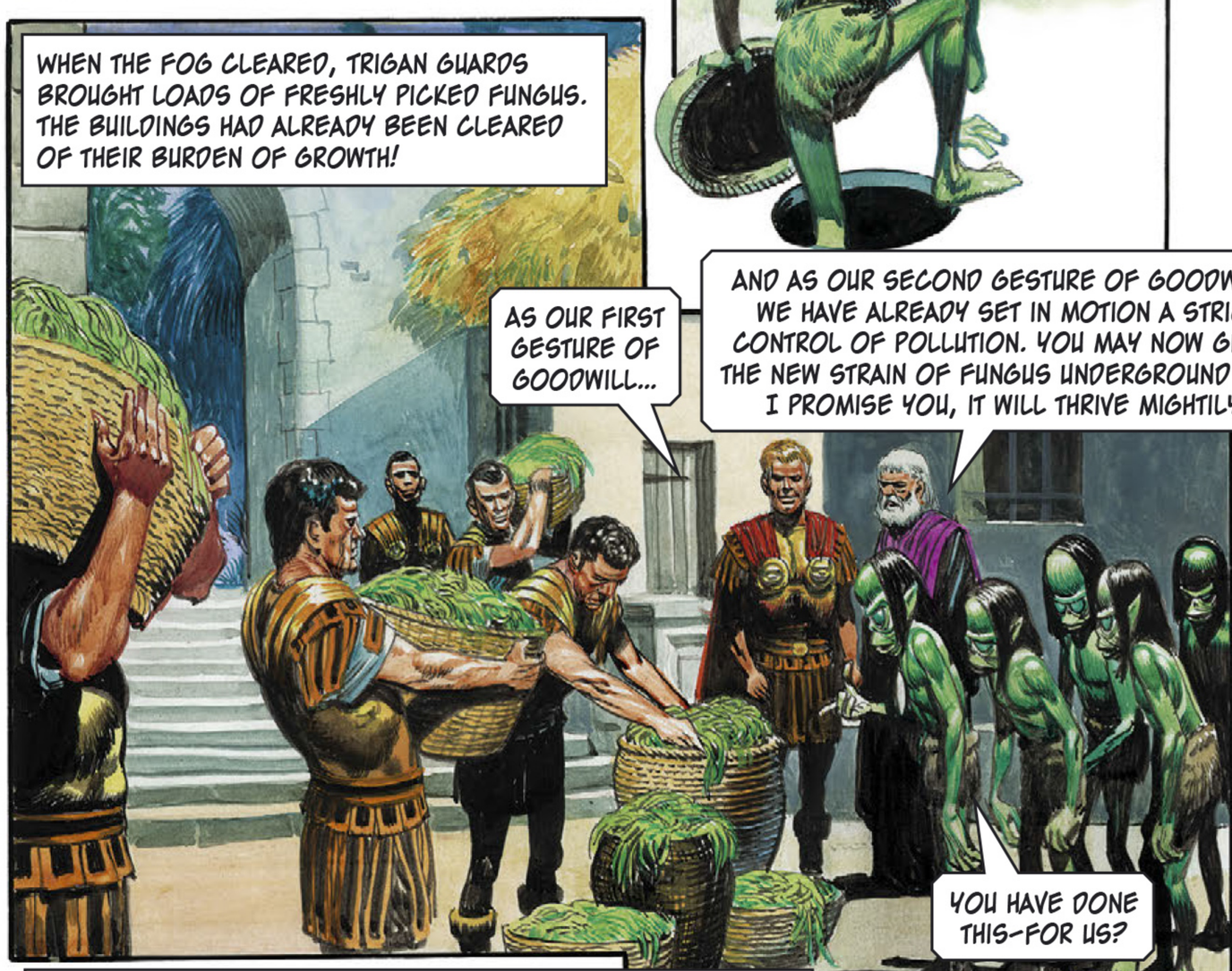
PRESENTLY, HE WAS POURING OUT HIS NEWS TO TRIGO AND THE LEADERS OF THE COUNCIL.
...AND THAT'S WHY THEY'RE TRYING TO DESTROY THE CITY!
ASTOUNDING! THERE MUST BE A REMEDY TO THIS SITUATION, PERIC. WHAT DO YOU ADVISE?
SIRE, I HAVE ALREADY THOUGHT OF A SOLUTION...

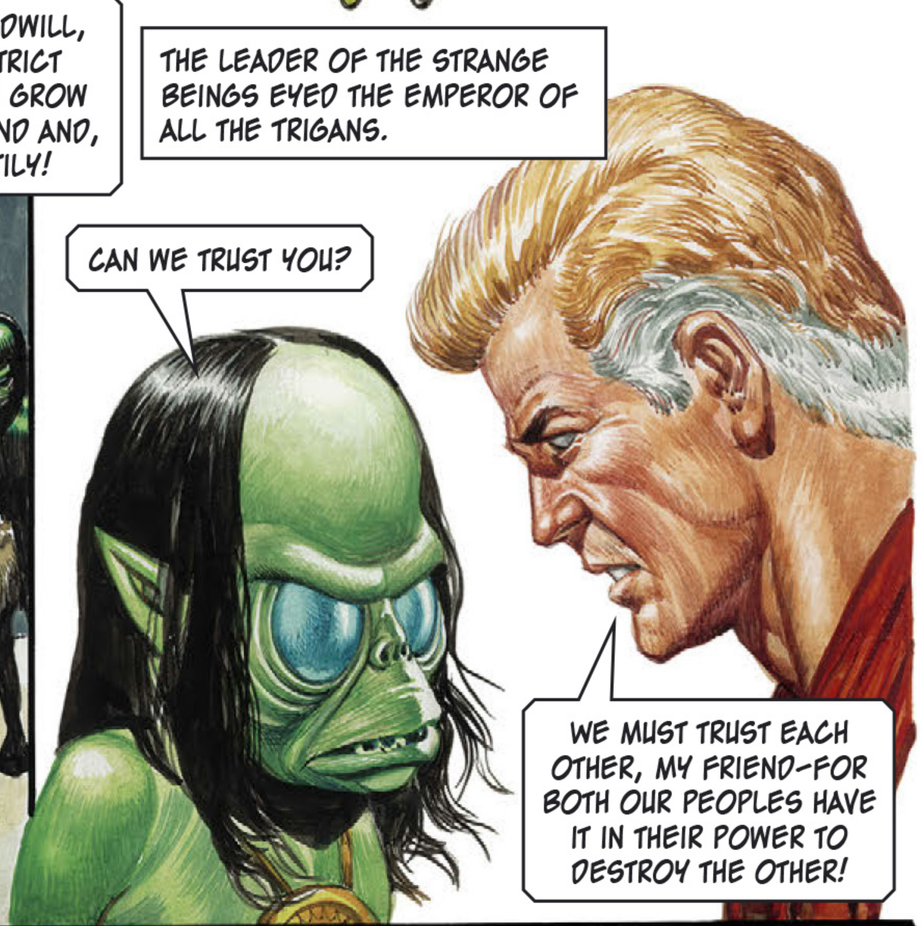
ELEKTON'S TOP SCIENTIST SMILED GRIMLY.
WE MUST PROVIDE A SHOCK FOR OUR FRIENDS FROM UNDERGROUND–A PLEASANT SHOCK!

A LUNAR MONTH PASSED. THE FUNGUS THAT ENVELOPED TRIGAN CITY GREW TO MATURITY AGAIN. ONE DAY, AS THE INHABITANTS HAD LEARNED TO EXPECT, THE GREEN FOG CAME SWIRLING FROM BELOW.
HERE IT COMES! PUT ON YOUR EYEPIECES!

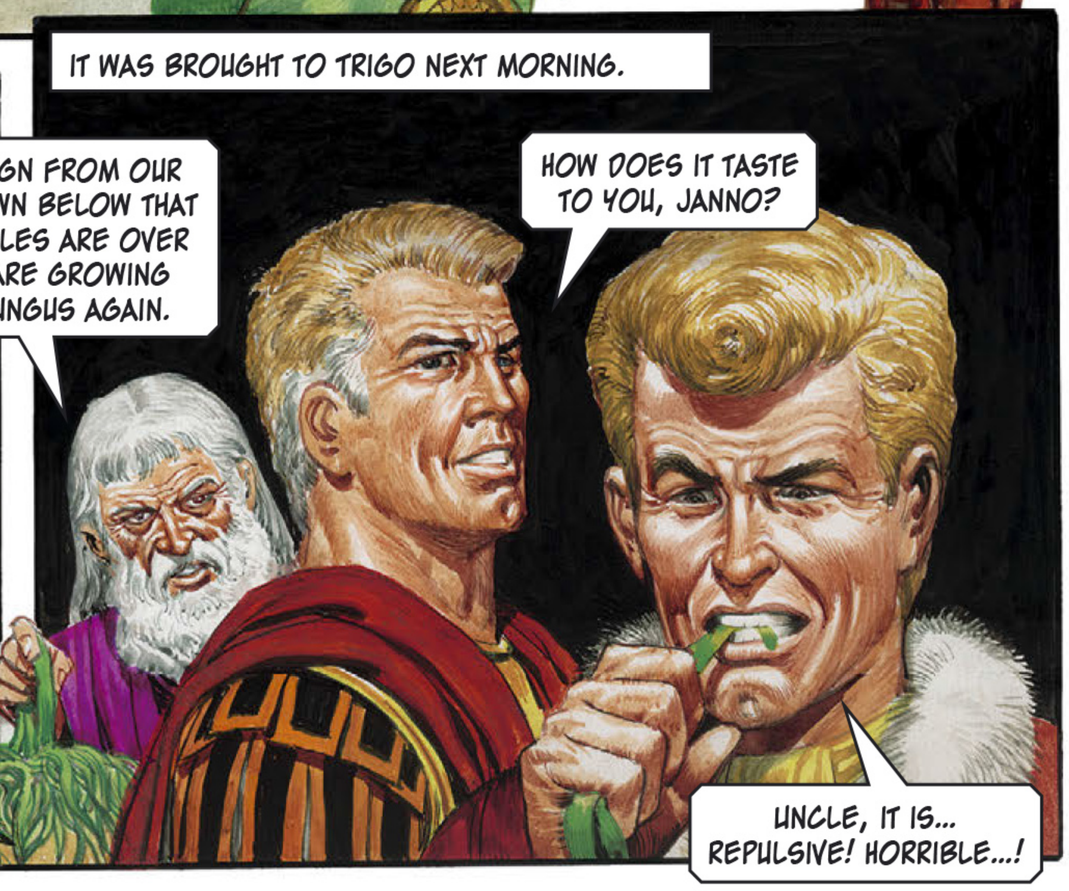
WHEN THE SWIRLING MURK HAD ENVELOPED TRIGAN CITY, THE ALIEN CREATURES CAME OUT...

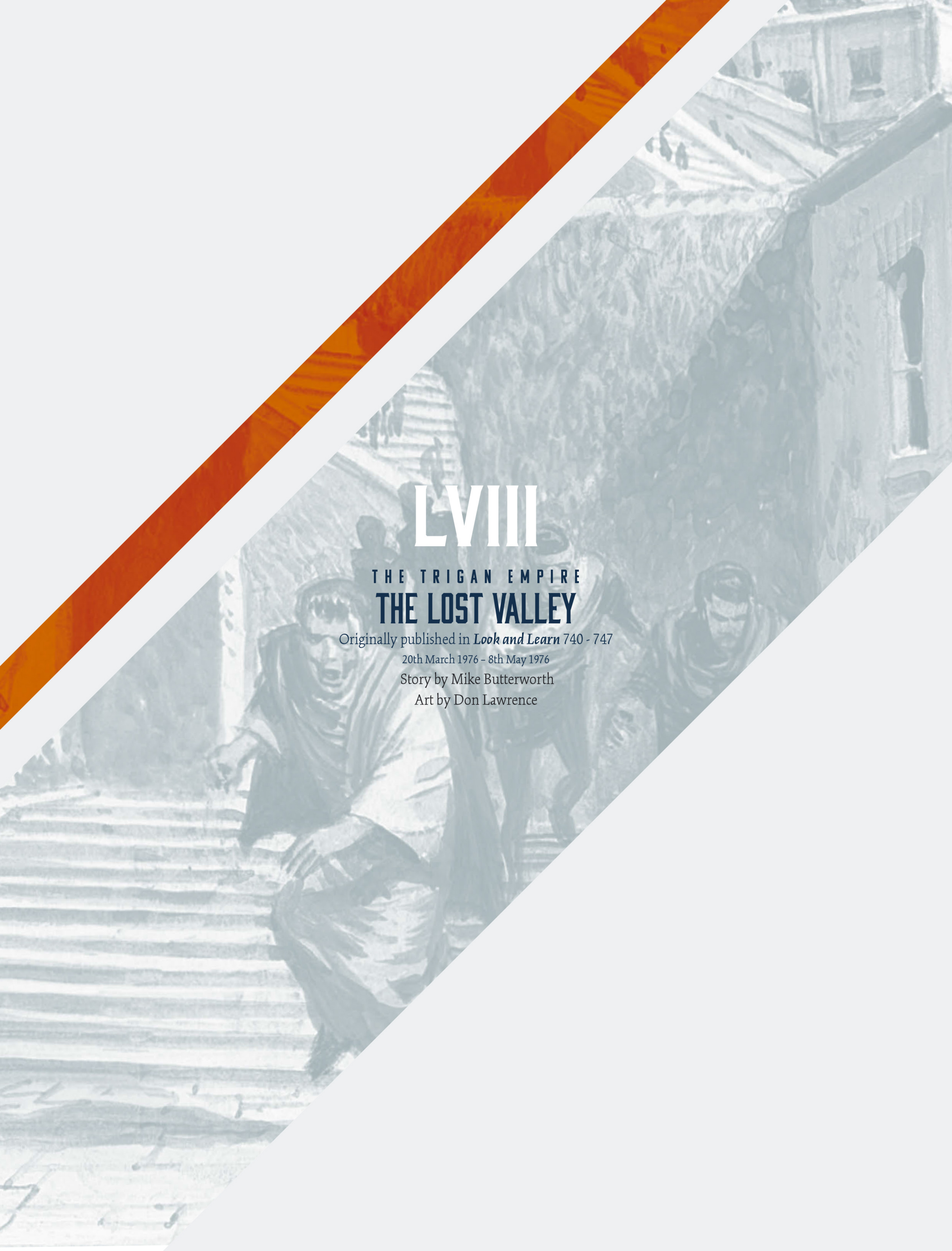
SUDDENLY—THEY WERE SURROUNDED!
IT WAS NOT DIFFICULT FRIEND—ONCE WE HAD THE PATTERN!
IT'S A TRAP! THEY'VE FOUND OUT HOW TO MAKE THE EYEPIECES!
AND IT IS NO TRAP, AS YOU WILL SEE!


WHEN THE FOG CLEARED, TRIGAN GUARDS BROUGHT LOADS OF FRESHLY PICKED FUNGUS. THE BUILDINGS HAD ALREADY BEEN CLEARED OF THEIR BURDEN OF GROWTH!
AS OUR FIRST GESTURE OF GOODWILL...
AND AS OUR SECOND GESTURE OF GOODWILL, WE HAVE ALREADY SET IN MOTION A STRICT CONTROL OF POLLUTION. YOU MAY NOW GROW THE NEW STRAIN OF FUNGUS UNDERGROUND AND, I PROMISE YOU, IT WILL THRIVE MIGHTILY!
YOU HAVE DONE THIS—FOR US?


THE LEADER OF THE STRANGE BEINGS EYED THE EMPEROR OF ALL THE TRIGANS.
CAN WE TRUST YOU?
WE MUST TRUST EACH OTHER, MY FRIEND—FOR BOTH OUR PEOPLES HAVE IT IN THEIR POWER TO DESTROY THE OTHER!

THE PEOPLE OF THE LOWER WORLD DEPARTED WITH THE NEW CROP OF FUNGUS AND THE TRIGANS SET TO TO CLEAN UP THEIR CITY. IN THE COURSE OF TIME, BY TRIAL AND ERROR, PERIC DEVISED A CHEMICAL COMPOUND THAT DESTROYED THE FUNGUS ON THE BUILDINGS. ONE NIGHT, MONTHS LATER, SOMETHING WAS STEALTHILY LEFT AT THE GATES OF THE IMPERIAL PALACE.


IT WAS BROUGHT TO TRIGO NEXT MORNING.
THIS IS A SIGN FROM OUR FRIENDS DOWN BELOW THAT THEIR TROUBLES ARE OVER AND THEY ARE GROWING HEALTHY FUNGUS AGAIN.
HOW DOES IT TASTE TO YOU, JANNO?
UNCLE, IT IS... REPULSIVE! HORRIBLE...!



LVIII

THE TRIGAN EMPIRE

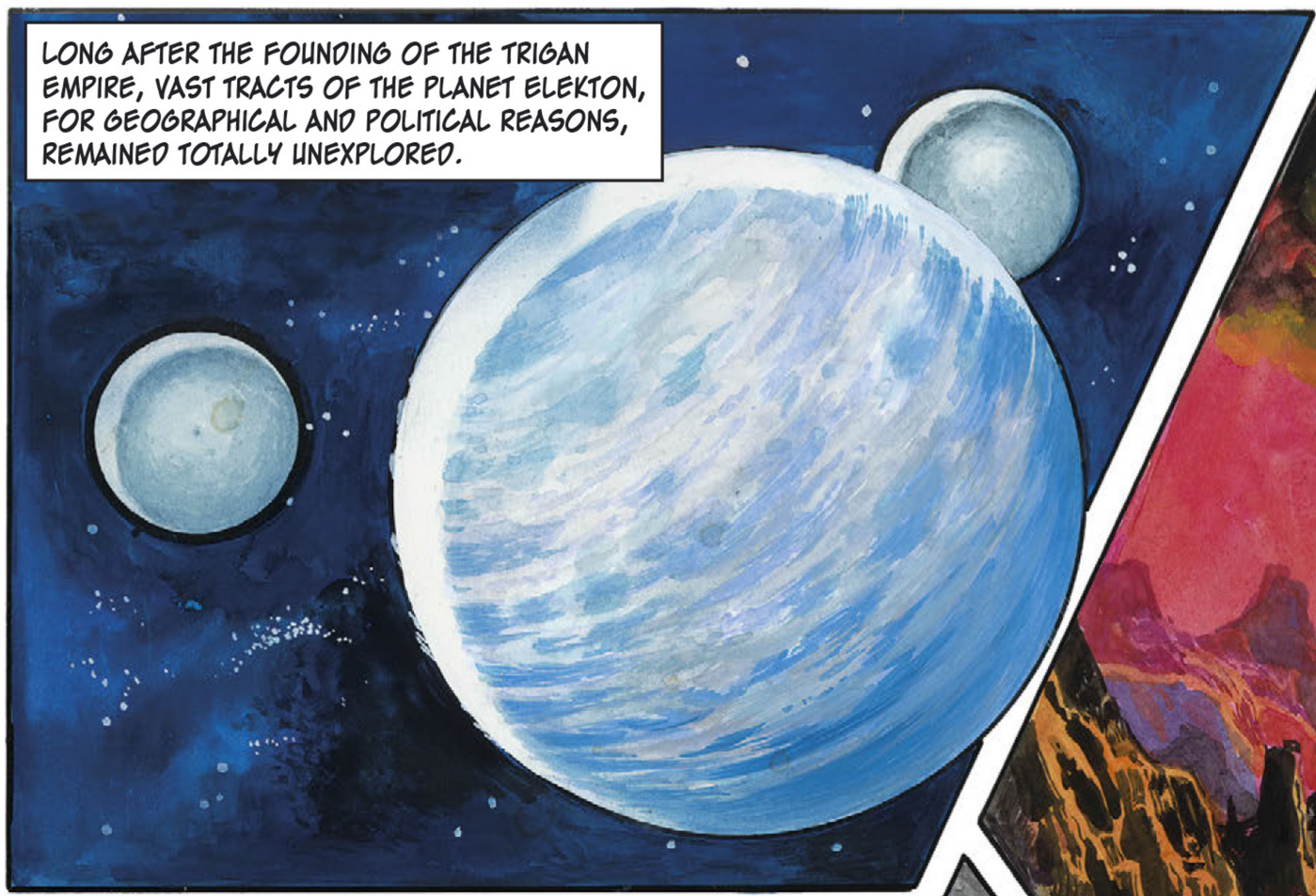
THE LOST VALLEY

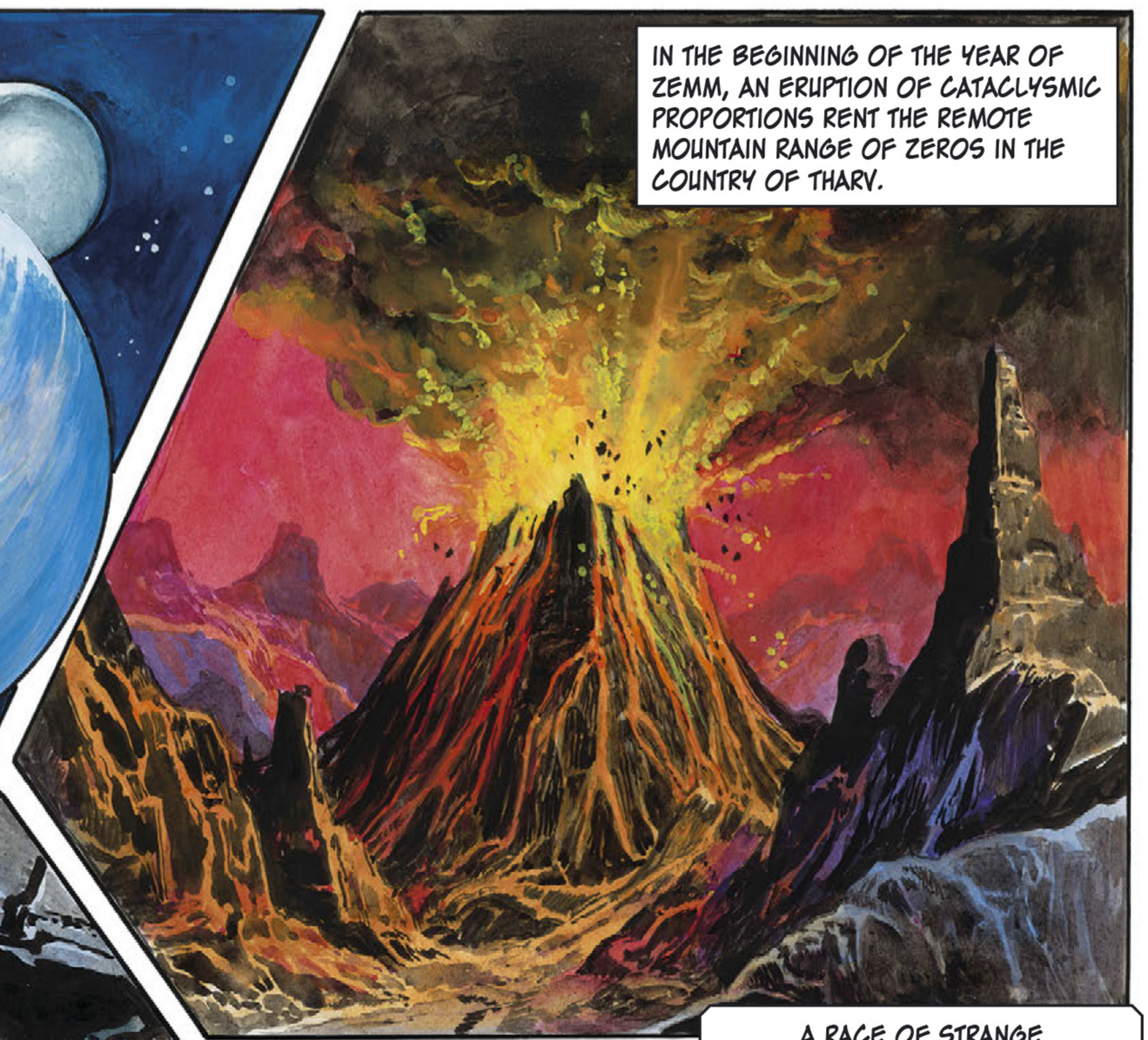
Originally published in ***Look and Learn*** 740 - 747

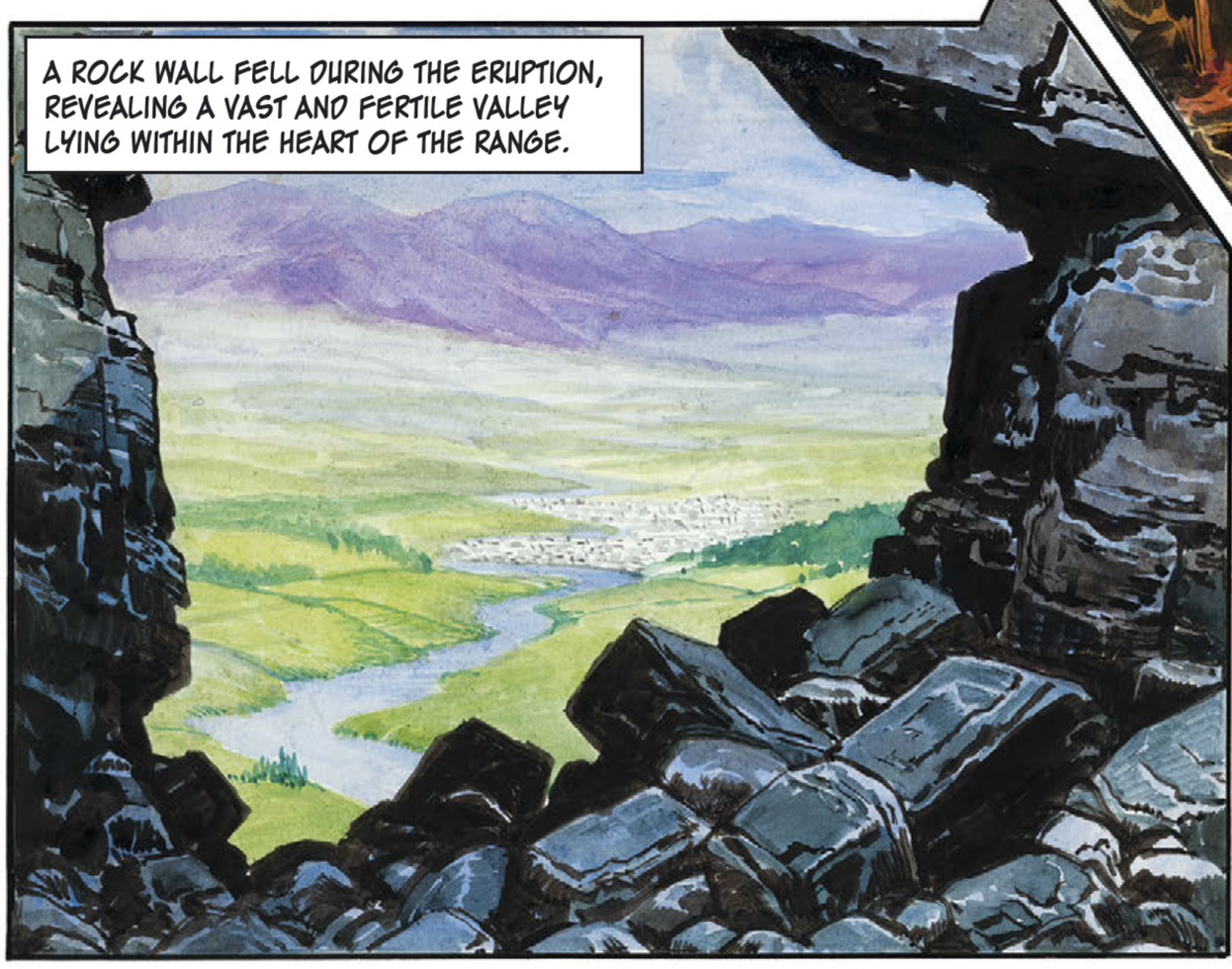
20th March 1976 – 8th May 1976

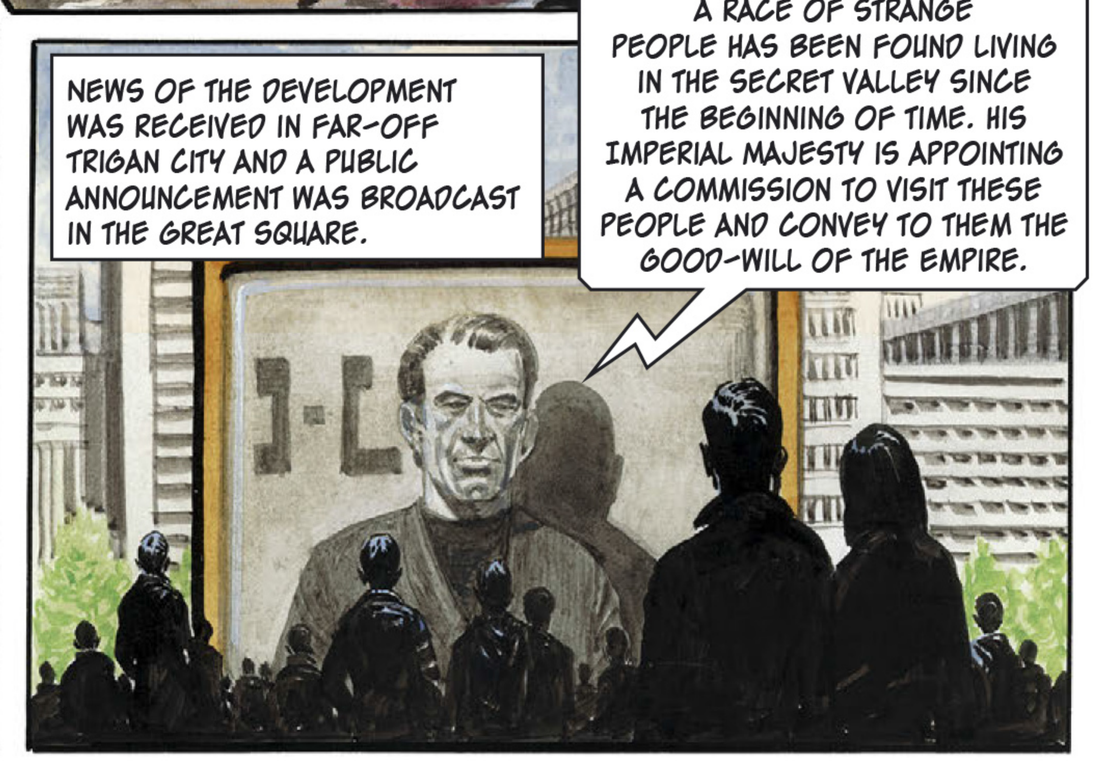
Story by Mike Butterworth

Art by Don Lawrence

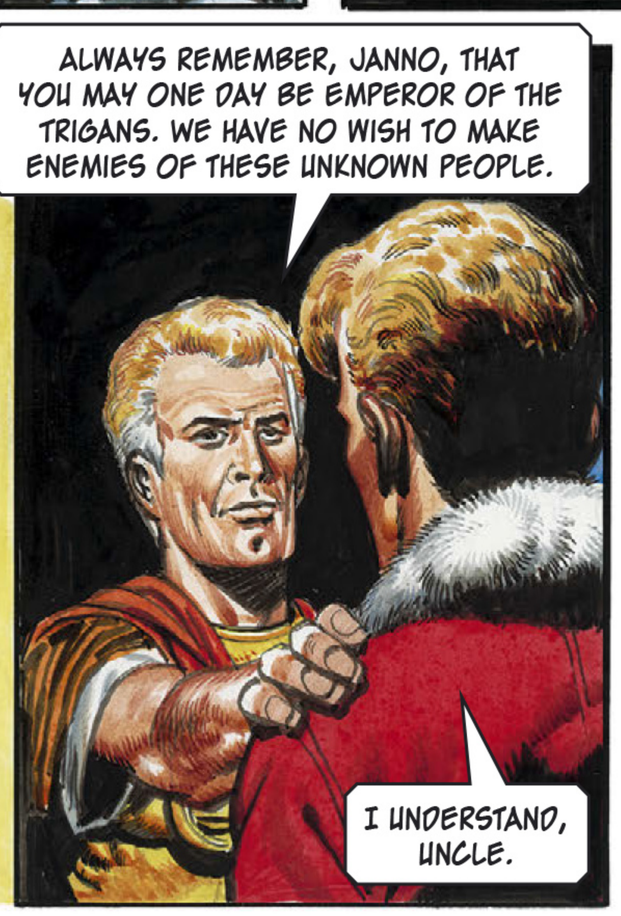

LONG AFTER THE FOUNDING OF THE TRIGAN EMPIRE, VAST TRACTS OF THE PLANET ELEKTON, FOR GEOGRAPHICAL AND POLITICAL REASONS, REMAINED TOTALLY UNEXPLORED.

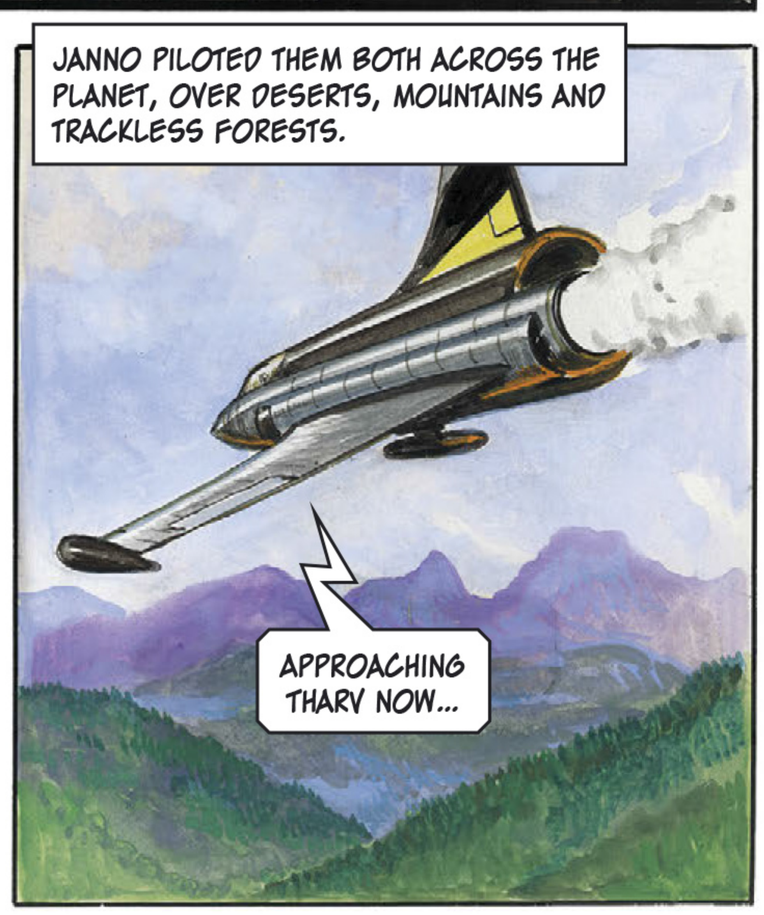

IN THE BEGINNING OF THE YEAR OF ZEMM, AN ERUPTION OF CATACLYSMIC PROPORTIONS RENT THE REMOTE MOUNTAIN RANGE OF ZEROS IN THE COUNTRY OF THARV.


A ROCK WALL FELL DURING THE ERUPTION, REVEALING A VAST AND FERTILE VALLEY LYING WITHIN THE HEART OF THE RANGE.


NEWS OF THE DEVELOPMENT WAS RECEIVED IN FAR-OFF TRIGAN CITY AND A PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT WAS BROADCAST IN THE GREAT SQUARE.
A RACE OF STRANGE PEOPLE HAS BEEN FOUND LIVING IN THE SECRET VALLEY SINCE THE BEGINNING OF TIME. HIS IMPERIAL MAJESTY IS APPOINTING A COMMISSION TO VISIT THESE PEOPLE AND CONVEY TO THEM THE GOOD-WILL OF THE EMPIRE.

IN FACT, IT WAS THE EMPEROR'S NEPHEW JANNO AND THE TOP SCIENTIST PERIC WHO WERE EVEN AT THAT MOMENT BEING BRIEFED BY THE EMPEROR...
I WANT YOU TO CONVINCE THESE PEOPLE THAT WE WISH ONLY FOR FRIENDSHIP AND THAT THEY HAVE NOTHING TO FEAR FROM US. UNDERSTOOD?
YES, IMPERIAL MAJESTY.
YES, UNCLE.


ALWAYS REMEMBER, JANNO, THAT YOU MAY ONE DAY BE EMPEROR OF THE TRIGANS. WE HAVE NO WISH TO MAKE ENEMIES OF THESE UNKNOWN PEOPLE.
I UNDERSTAND, UNCLE.


JANNO PILOTED THEM BOTH ACROSS THE PLANET, OVER DESERTS, MOUNTAINS AND TRACKLESS FORESTS.
APPROACHING THARV NOW...

THE AIR SPACE OVER THE THARV PROVINCE SURROUNDING THE ZEROS RANGE WAS JEALOUSLY GUARDED BY A TREATY THAT THE THARVS HAD MADE WITH THE EMPIRE. THE TWO EMISSARIES WERE OBLIGED TO TRAVEL BY KREED UNDER THE SUSPICIOUS EYES OF MOUNTAIN TRIBESMEN.

WILL THEY SHOOT US?

IT HAS BEEN KNOWN! BUT DON'T WORRY... CANNIBALISM WAS STAMPED OUT LAST YEAR. AT LEAST... THAT'S WHAT THEY SAY!

PRESENTLY, THEY CAME SAFELY TO THE STRANGE VALLEY.

IT'S LIKE A MIRACLE!

THEY WERE MET BY THE LEADERS OF THE PEOPLE WHO INHABITED THE VALLEY.

SIR...

ADDRESS ME AS "ENLIGHTENED ONE" IF YOU WOULD BE SO KIND. I AM THE PRESENT ELECTED LEADER OF THE NOBES–AND YOU WOULD SEEM TO BE MORE EMISSARIES FROM THE OUTSIDE WORLD. WE ARE FLATTERED.

DON LAWRENCE

THERE WAS A STRONG ATTITUDE OF SUPERIORITY ABOUT THE LEADER OF THE NOBES.

WE ARE AWARE THAT, BECAUSE YOU HAVE BEEN CUT OFF FROM US SINCE THE BEGINNING OF TIME, THERE ARE VAST DIFFERENCES BETWEEN US. BUT, I ASSURE YOU, THE NOBES ARE MORE THAN WILLING TO HELP YOU.

HELP US? BUT... HOW?

WE WILL ASSIST YOU WITH OUR SUPERIOR TECHNOLOGY...

...OF WHICH THAT FLYING MACHINE IS A NOTABLE EXAMPLE. ONE DAY, WITH OUR HELP, YOU WILL BE ABLE TO CONSTRUCT ANOTHER OF THOSE!

A FEW PACES DISTANT WAS THE PIECE OF "SUPERIOR TECHNOLOGY"!

AS THE TRIGANS WATCHED, A YOUNG NOBE CLIMBED ABOARD THE AIRCRAFT AND TOOK OFF.

THERE WAS PRIDE IN THE VOICE OF THE NOBE LEADER.

IT MUST BE A REVELATION TO YOU POOR, IGNORANT PEOPLE TO SEE A LIVING PERSON FLY LIKE A BIRD.

WHAT WILL THEY THINK OF NEXT?

BY THE STARS! HE'S GOING TO CRASH!

THEY LIFTED OUT THE STUNNED PILOT.

WHAT HARD LUCK. HE WAS DOING QUITE NICELY.

WHAT ARE YOU SAYING, YOUNG MAN? THAT WAS A PERFECT LANDING! THERE IS ONLY ONE WAY TO LAND AN AIRCRAFT... THAT IS, TO CRASH IT!

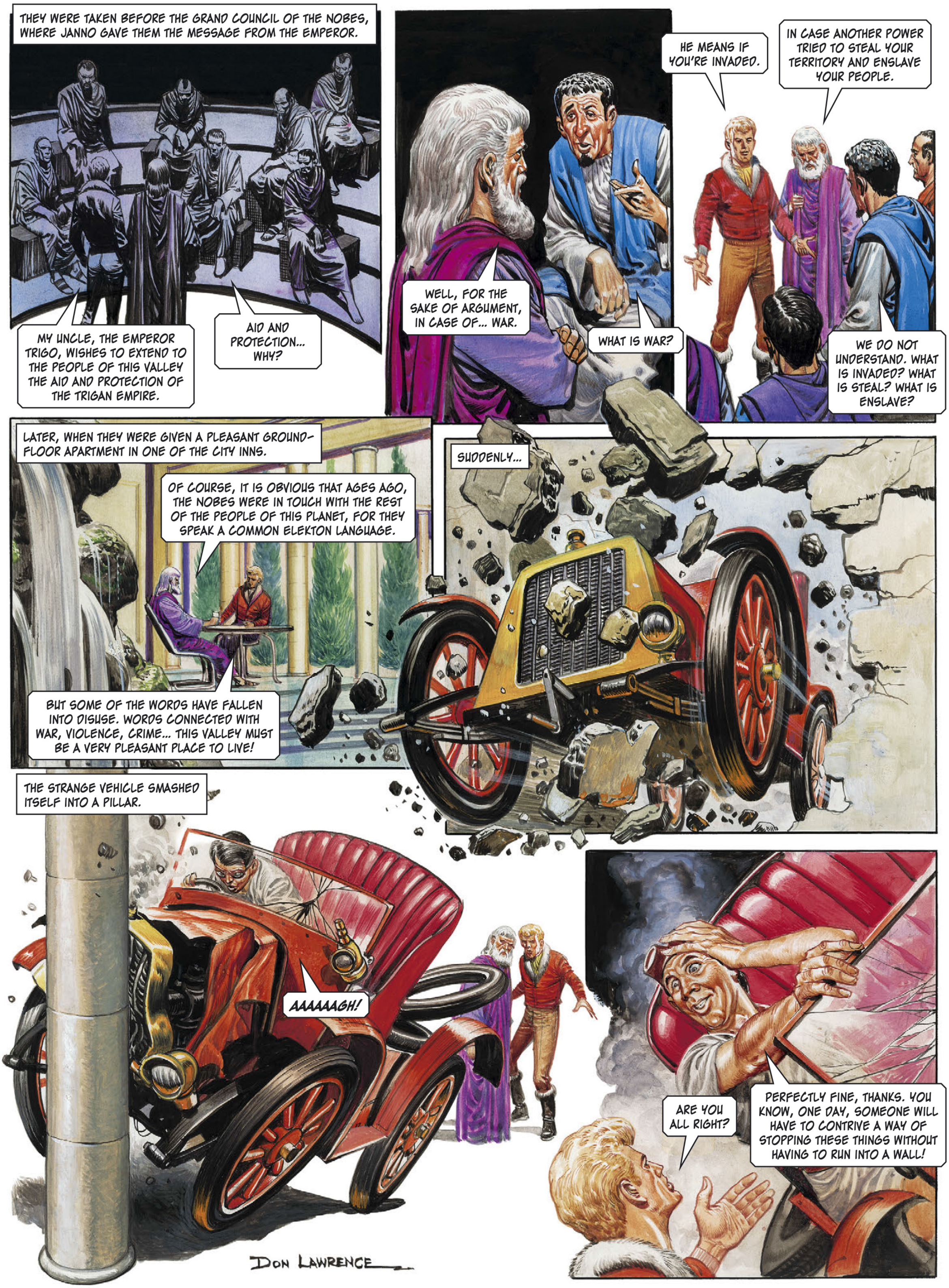
SOMETIME, SOMEHOW, WE HAVE TO BREAK THE NEWS TO THESE DELIGHTFUL PEOPLE THAT THE REST OF THE PLANET CAN FLY AT TEN TIMES THE SPEED OF SOUND!

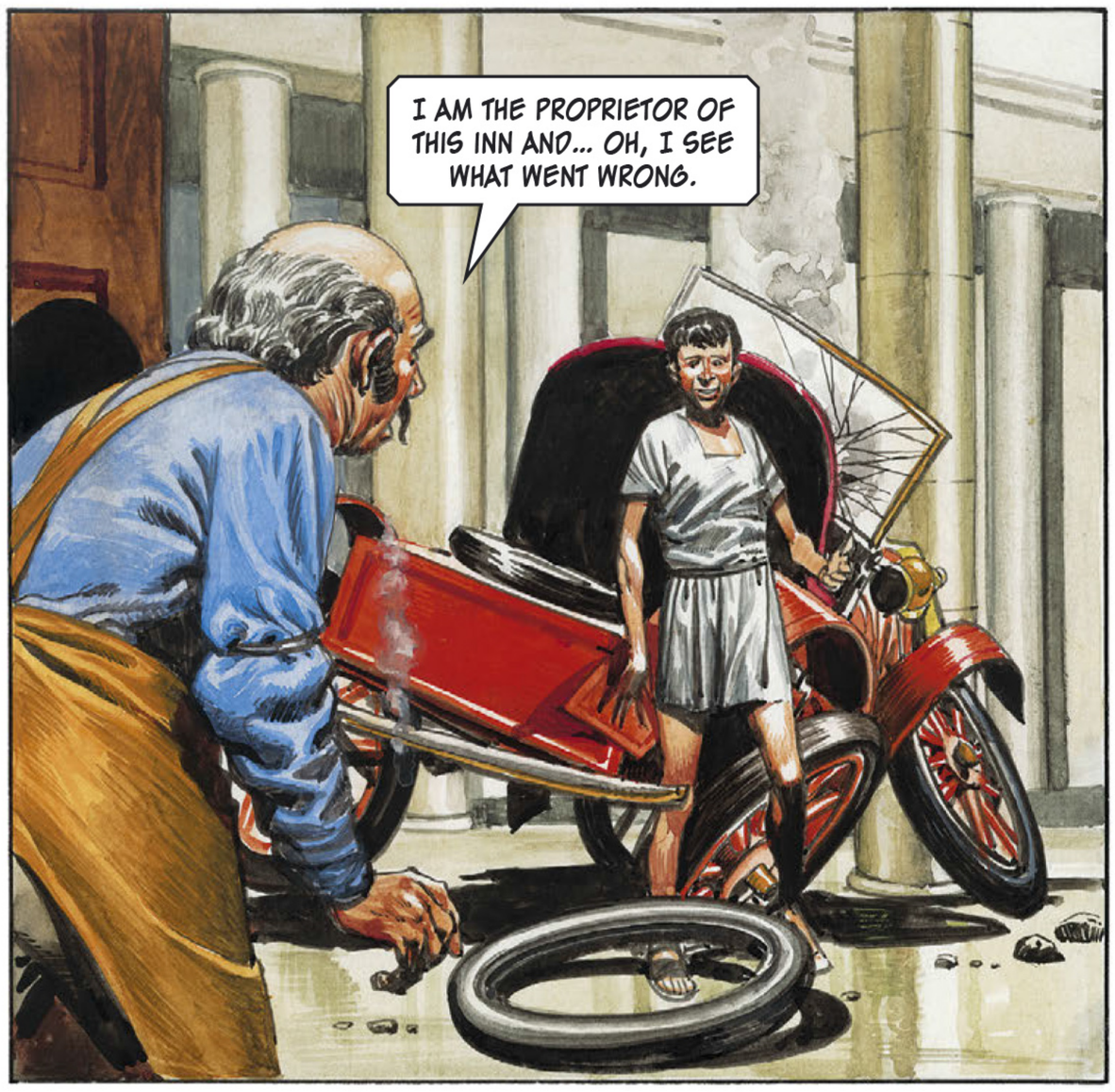
THEY'RE NEVER GOING TO BELIEVE US. THEY THINK WE'RE ALL BACKWARD COMPARED TO THEM!

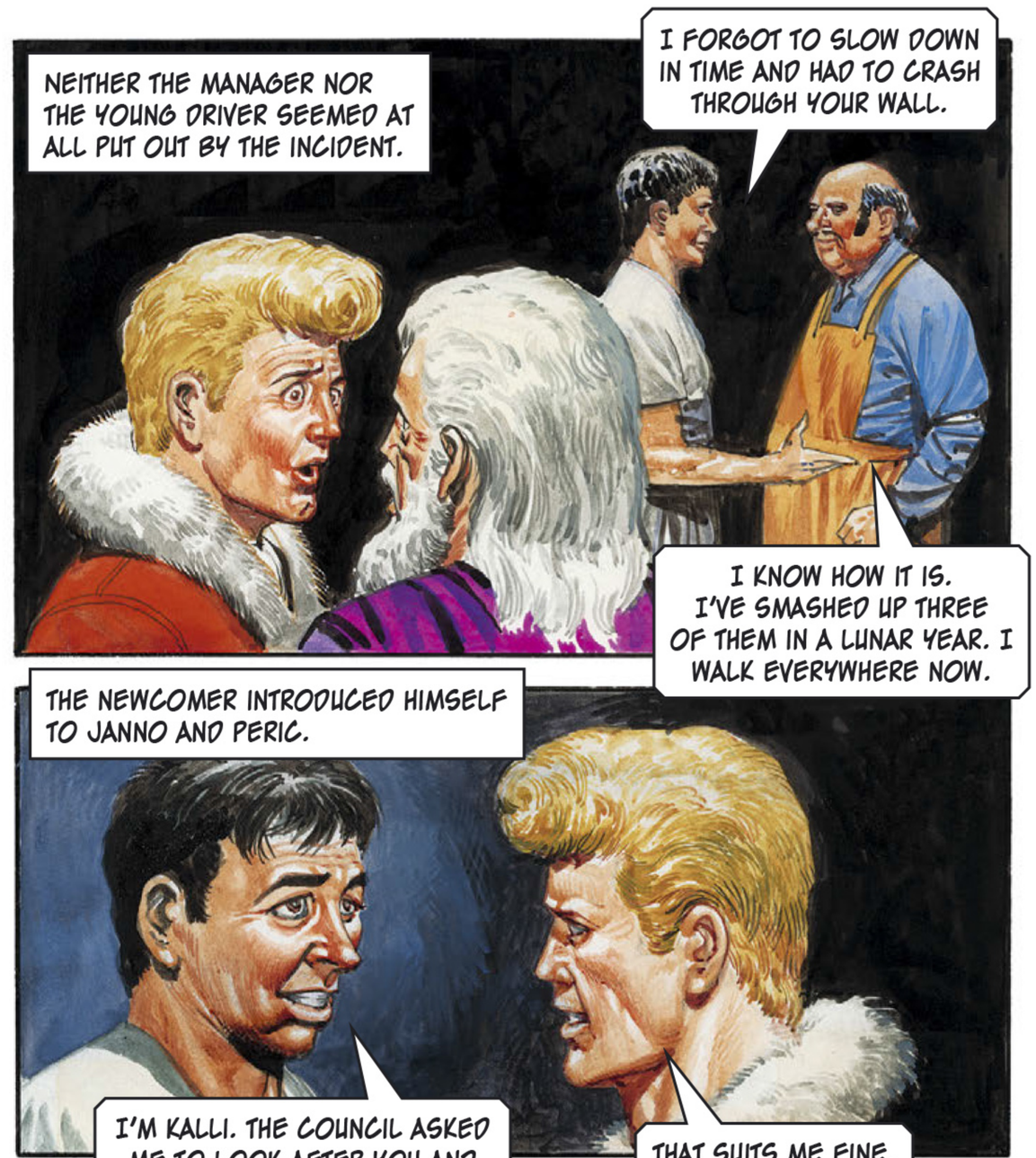
THEIR HOSTS LED THEM THROUGH THE CAPITAL CITY OF THE HIDDEN VALLEY.

THEY CAN'T BUILD AIRCRAFT—BUT THEY CAN BUILD CITIES THAT ARE A DELIGHT TO LIVE IN.

IT'S VERY RESTFUL, I MUST ADMIT.

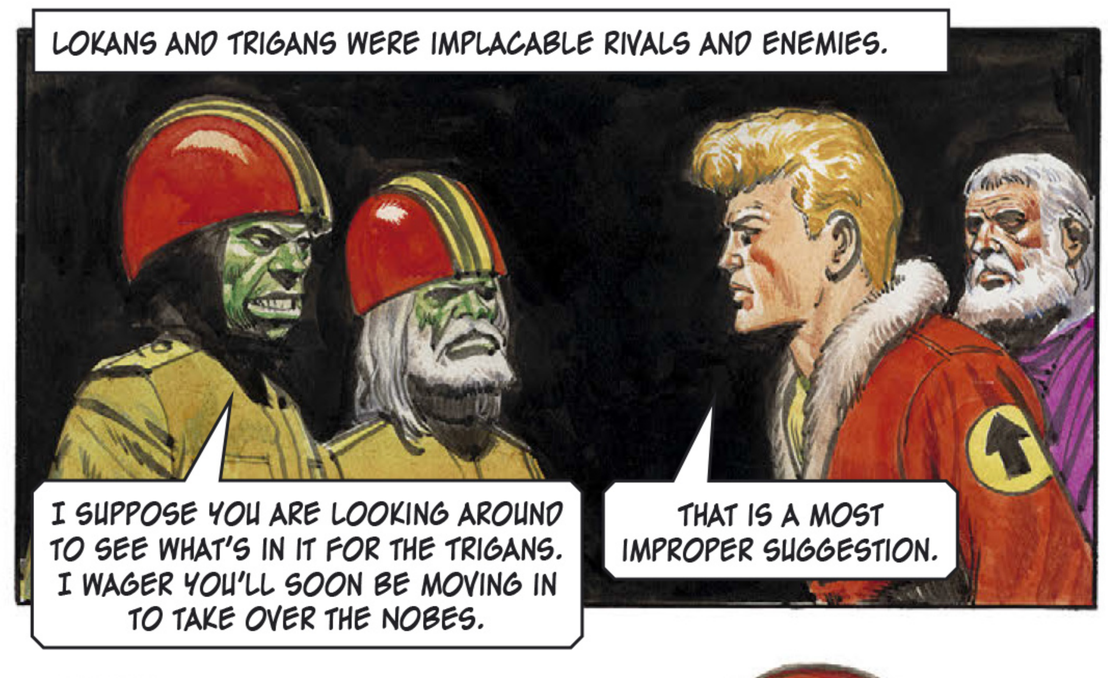

THEY WERE TAKEN BEFORE THE GRAND COUNCIL OF THE NOBES, WHERE JANNO GAVE THEM THE MESSAGE FROM THE EMPEROR.
MY UNCLE, THE EMPEROR TRIGO, WISHES TO EXTEND TO THE PEOPLE OF THIS VALLEY THE AID AND PROTECTION OF THE TRIGAN EMPIRE.
AID AND PROTECTION... WHY?
WELL, FOR THE SAKE OF ARGUMENT, IN CASE OF... WAR.
WHAT IS WAR?
HE MEANS IF YOU'RE INVADED.
IN CASE ANOTHER POWER TRIED TO STEAL YOUR TERRITORY AND ENSLAVE YOUR PEOPLE.
WE DO NOT UNDERSTAND. WHAT IS INVADED? WHAT IS STEAL? WHAT IS ENSLAVE?
LATER, WHEN THEY WERE GIVEN A PLEASANT GROUND-FLOOR APARTMENT IN ONE OF THE CITY INNS.
OF COURSE, IT IS OBVIOUS THAT AGES AGO, THE NOBES WERE IN TOUCH WITH THE REST OF THE PEOPLE OF THIS PLANET, FOR THEY SPEAK A COMMON ELEKTON LANGUAGE.
BUT SOME OF THE WORDS HAVE FALLEN INTO DISUSE. WORDS CONNECTED WITH WAR, VIOLENCE, CRIME... THIS VALLEY MUST BE A VERY PLEASANT PLACE TO LIVE!
SUDDENLY...
THE STRANGE VEHICLE SMASHED ITSELF INTO A PILLAR.
AAAAAAGH!
ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?
PERFECTLY FINE, THANKS. YOU KNOW, ONE DAY, SOMEONE WILL HAVE TO CONTRIVE A WAY OF STOPPING THESE THINGS WITHOUT HAVING TO RUN INTO A WALL!
DON LAWRENCE


I AM THE PROPRIETOR OF THIS INN AND... OH, I SEE WHAT WENT WRONG.

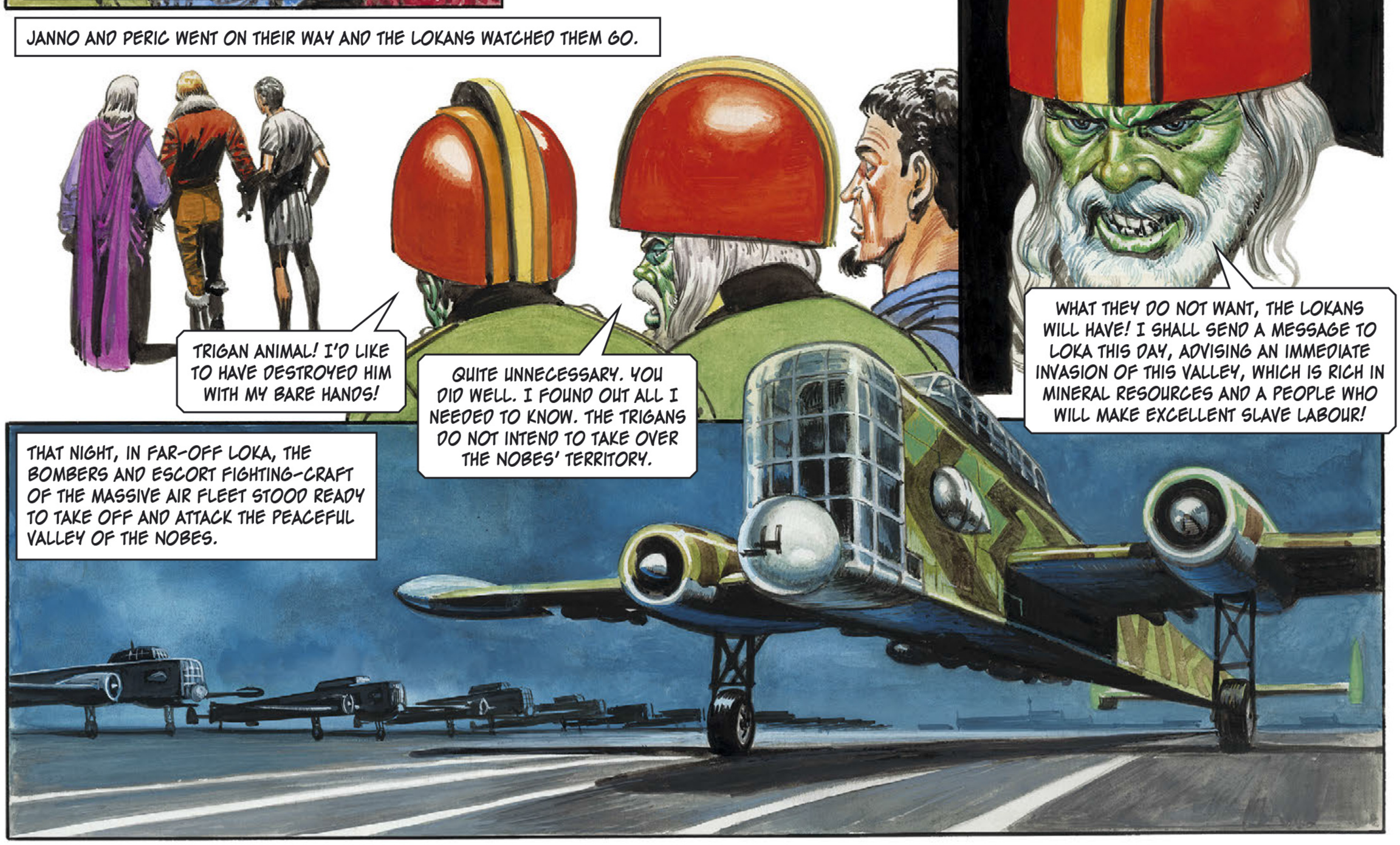

NEITHER THE MANAGER NOR THE YOUNG DRIVER SEEMED AT ALL PUT OUT BY THE INCIDENT.
I FORGOT TO SLOW DOWN IN TIME AND HAD TO CRASH THROUGH YOUR WALL.
I KNOW HOW IT IS. I'VE SMASHED UP THREE OF THEM IN A LUNAR YEAR. I WALK EVERYWHERE NOW.
THE NEWCOMER INTRODUCED HIMSELF TO JANNO AND PERIC.
I'M KALLI. THE COUNCIL ASKED ME TO LOOK AFTER YOU AND SHOW YOU AROUND. I'M AFRAID WE'LL HAVE TO WALK.
THAT SUITS ME FINE. I THINK IT WILL BE... ER... SAFER.

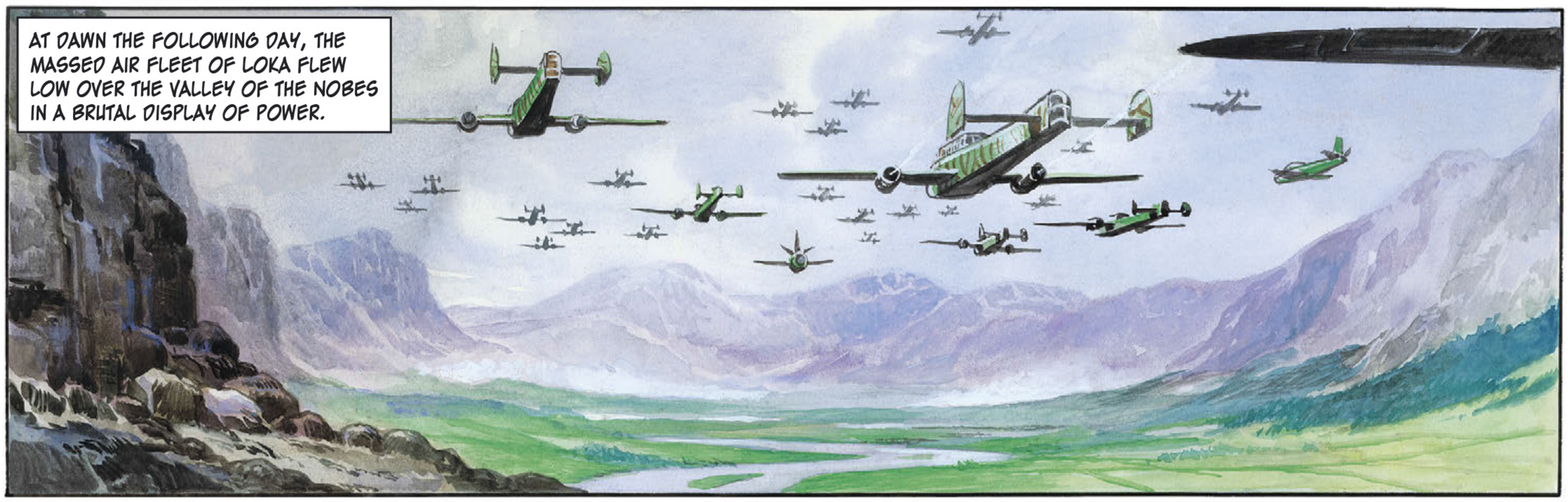
THEIR GUIDE TOOK THEM THROUGH THE DELIGHTFUL CITY OF THE NOBES.
OVER THERE IS THE STADIUM WHERE WE PLAY BOLLO. BOLLO IS OUR NATIONAL SPORT AND OUR NATIONAL OBSESSION.

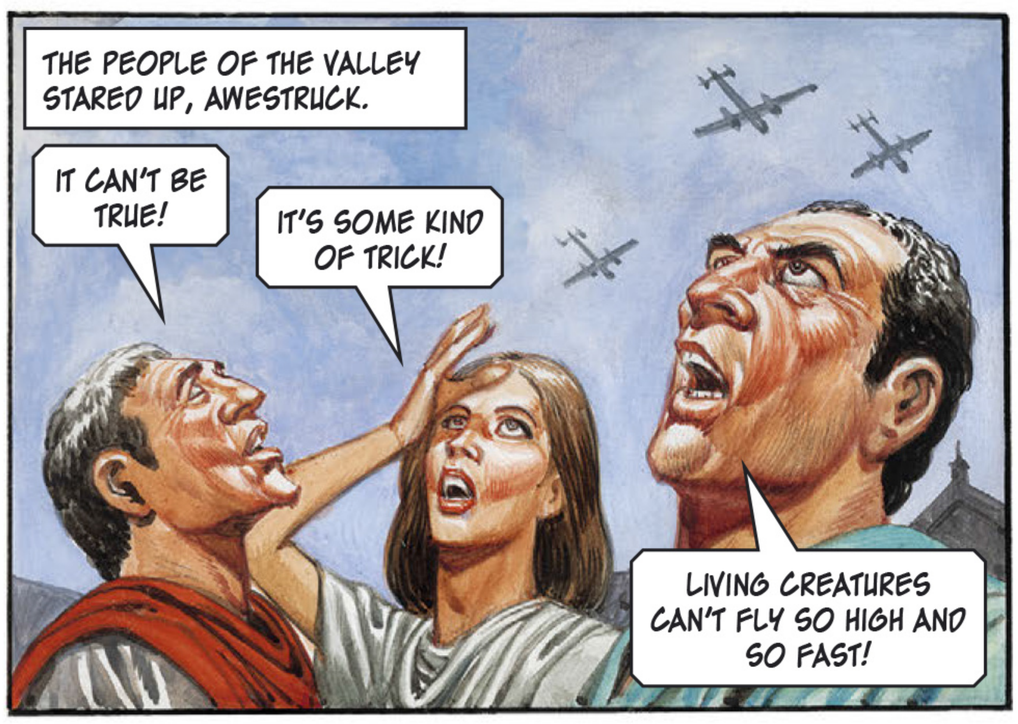
BOLLO, THE TRIGANS DISCOVERED, WAS PLAYED WITH A HARD METAL BALL. THE GAME WAS FAST...
...AND VIOLENT!
ONE!
TWO!

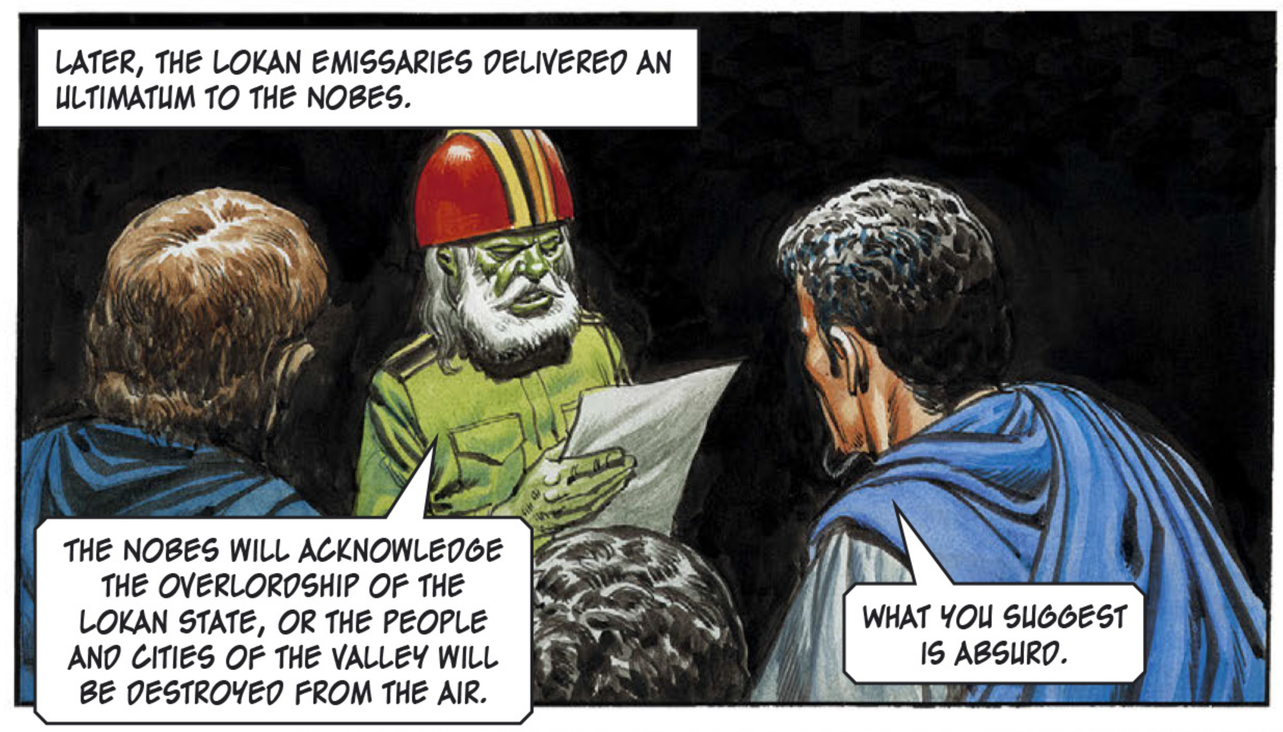


JANNO AND PERIC WENT ON THEIR WAY AND THE LOKANS WATCHED THEM GO.




AT DAWN THE FOLLOWING DAY, THE MASSED AIR FLEET OF LOKA FLEW LOW OVER THE VALLEY OF THE NOBES IN A BRUTAL DISPLAY OF POWER.


THE PEOPLE OF THE VALLEY STARED UP, AWESTRUCK.
IT CAN'T BE TRUE!
IT'S SOME KIND OF TRICK!
LIVING CREATURES CAN'T FLY SO HIGH AND SO FAST!

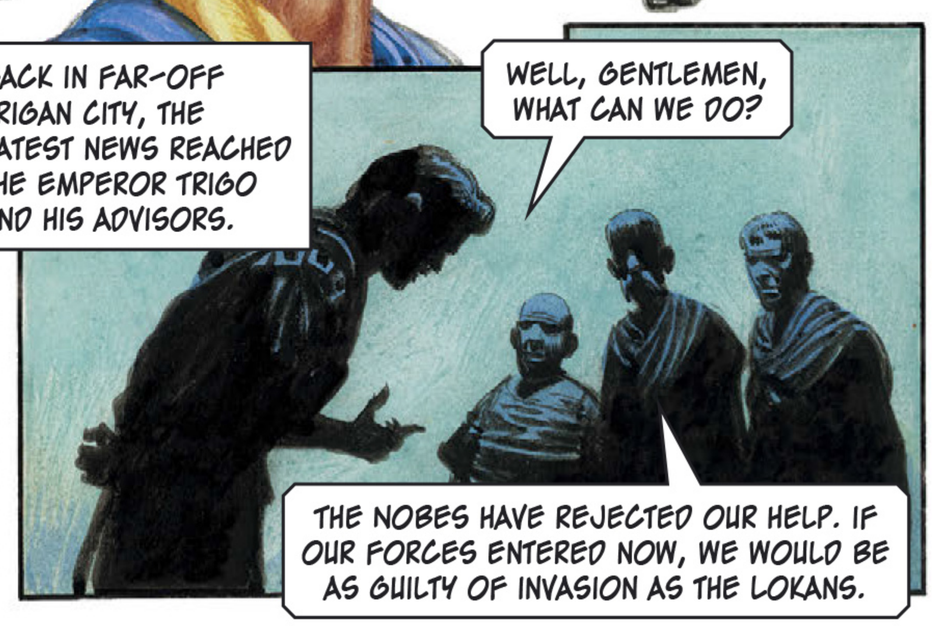

LATER, THE LOKAN EMISSARIES DELIVERED AN ULTIMATUM TO THE NOBES.
THE NOBES WILL ACKNOWLEDGE THE OVERLORDSHIP OF THE LOKAN STATE, OR THE PEOPLE AND CITIES OF THE VALLEY WILL BE DESTROYED FROM THE AIR.
WHAT YOU SUGGEST IS ABSURD.

NEXT, THE EMISSARIES OF THE TRIGAN EMPIRE, WITH JANNO AS SPOKESMAN.
THE TRIGAN EMPIRE OFFERS YOU THE PROTECTION OF ITS POWER. ALL YOU HAVE TO DO IS ASK.
I THANK THE TRIGAN EMPIRE—BUT WE CAN LOOK AFTER OURSELVES.

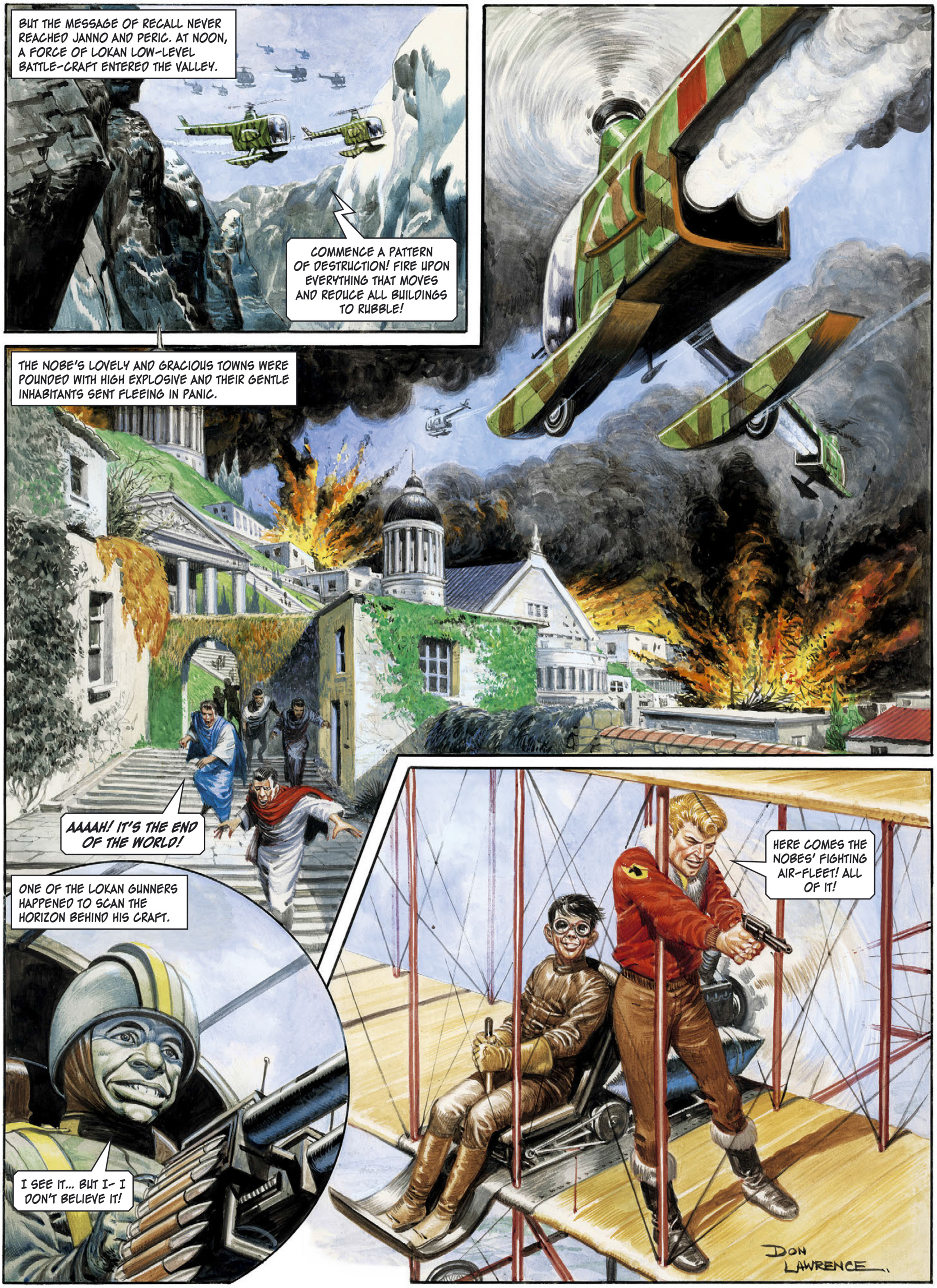
AFTER ALL, WE, TOO, HAVE A SUPERIOR TECHNOLOGY. THINK, FOR INSTANCE, OF OUR AIR FLEET!

AS JANNO SAID LATER, TO HIS NEW FRIEND KALLI...
DO YOU THINK YOU COULD DEFEND THE VALLEY FOR ANY LENGTH OF TIME WITH THAT COLLECTION OF MUSEUM PIECES?
WE CAN BUT DO OUR BEST.

IF THE LOKANS COME, I, FOR ONE, WILL TAKE TO THE AIR AGAINST THEM!
THEN I REQUEST THE HONOUR TO ACCOMPANY YOU, KALLI!


BACK IN FAR-OFF TRIGAN CITY, THE LATEST NEWS REACHED THE EMPEROR TRIGO AND HIS ADVISORS.
WELL, GENTLEMEN, WHAT CAN WE DO?
THE NOBES HAVE REJECTED OUR HELP. IF OUR FORCES ENTERED NOW, WE WOULD BE AS GUILTY OF INVASION AS THE LOKANS.

THEN THE LOKANS HAVE OUT-MANOEUVRED US. ORDER JANNO AND PERIC TO RETURN.


BUT THE MESSAGE OF RECALL NEVER REACHED JANNO AND PERIC. AT NOON, A FORCE OF LOKAN LOW-LEVEL BATTLE-CRAFT ENTERED THE VALLEY.
COMMENCE A PATTERN OF DESTRUCTION! FIRE UPON EVERYTHING THAT MOVES AND REDUCE ALL BUILDINGS TO RUBBLE!
THE NOBE'S LOVELY AND GRACIOUS TOWNS WERE POUNDED WITH HIGH EXPLOSIVE AND THEIR GENTLE INHABITANTS SENT FLEEING IN PANIC.
AAAAH! IT'S THE END OF THE WORLD!
ONE OF THE LOKAN GUNNERS HAPPENED TO SCAN THE HORIZON BEHIND HIS CRAFT.
I SEE IT... BUT I- I DON'T BELIEVE IT!
HERE COMES THE NOBES' FIGHTING AIR-FLEET! ALL OF IT!
DON LAWRENCE

AS THEY CLOSED WITH THE LOKAN BATTLE-CRAFT, JANNO FIRED HIS PISTOL...
ONE DOWN... AND FIVE TO GO!
THE NEXT INSTANT, HE WAS CLINGING FOR DEAR LIFE AS HIS FRIEND, KALLI, BANKED VIOLENTLY TO AVOID THE RETURN FIRE.
HEY! ARE YOU TRYING TO GET RID OF ME?
SORRY!
HANGING ONTO A STRUT WITH ONE HAND, JANNO BLASTED LOOSE AGAIN.
GOT HIM!
JANNO'S SECOND VICTIM SWERVED INTO THE PATH OF ONE OF ITS WING-MATES- WITH DISASTROUS CONSEQUENCES!
THAT'S THREE OUT OF SIX!
GREAT! LET'S DOWN THE OTHER THREE!
BUT THE REMAINING LOKAN CREWMEN HAD OTHER IDEAS.
WE'VE LOST HALF OUR FORCE. THE HOSTILE CRAFT MUST BE ARMED WITH A SECRET WEAPON OF INVINCIBLE POWER.

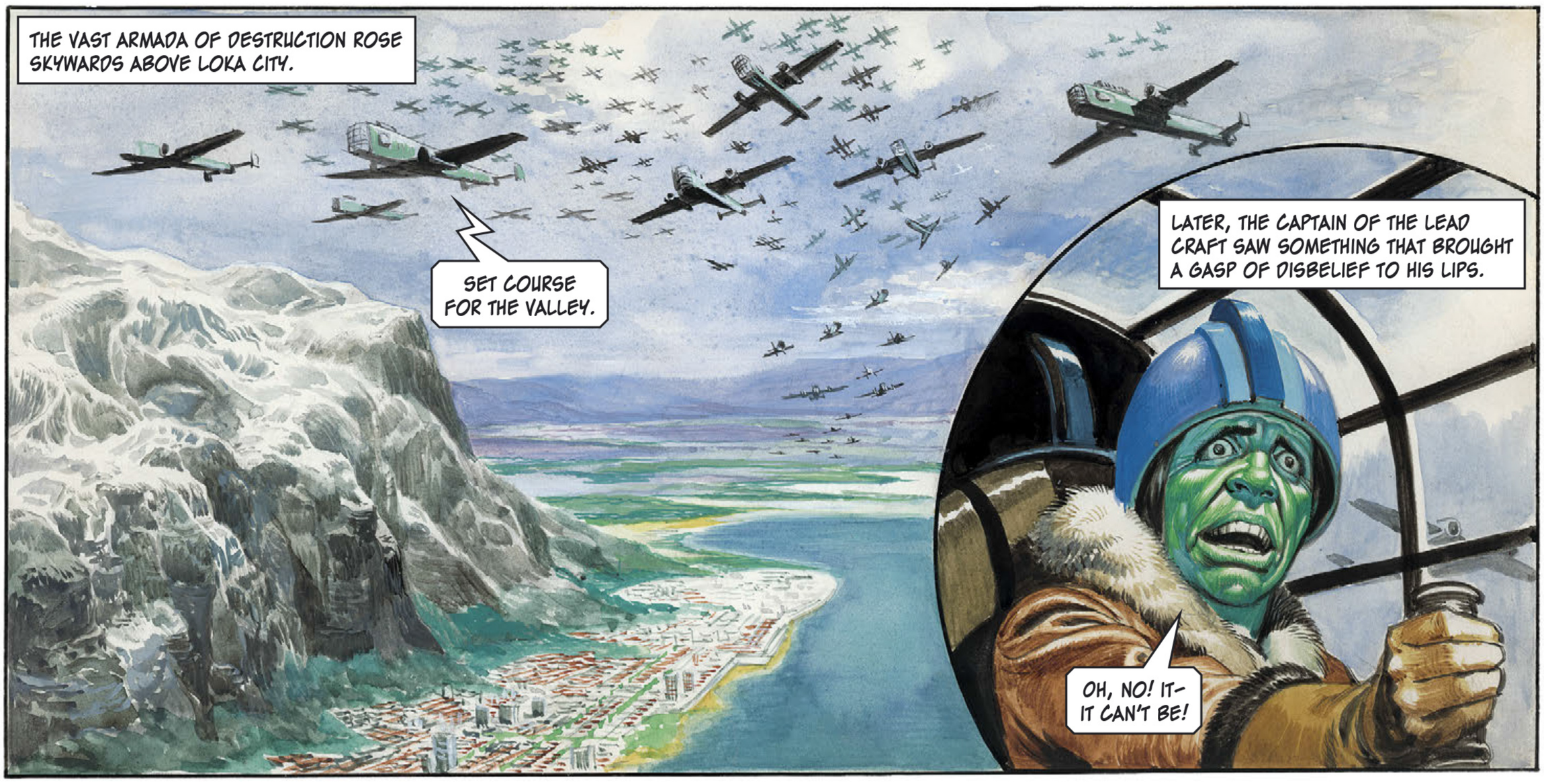
BREAK OFF THE ATTACK! SET COURSE BACK TO BASE!

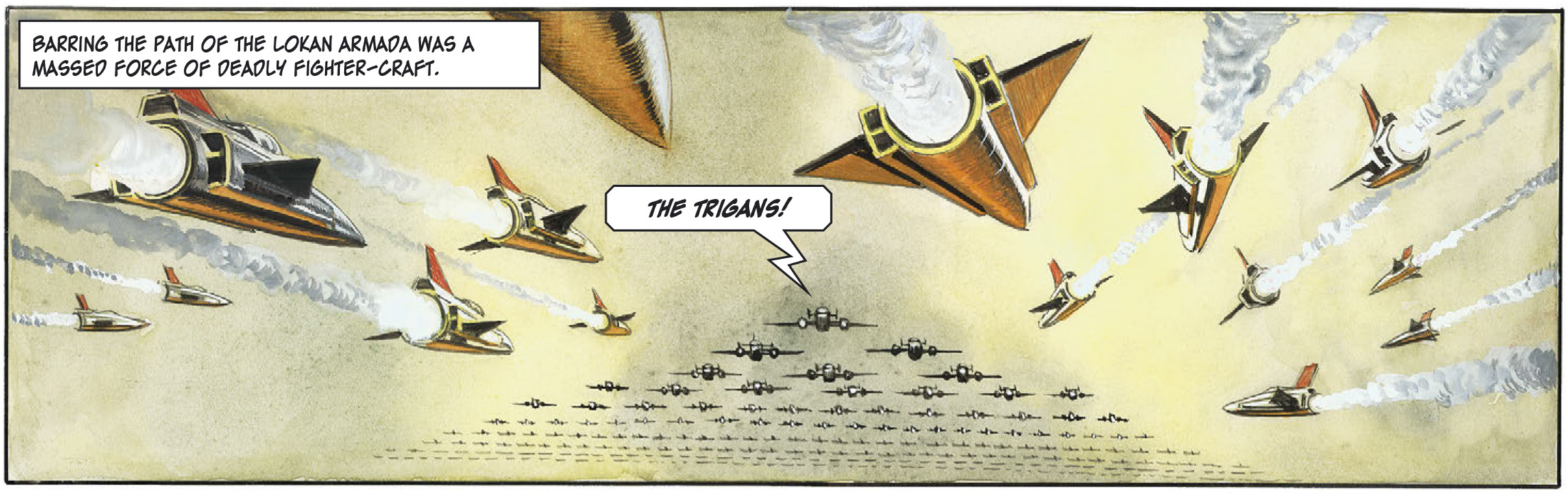
TRIUMPHANTLY, KALLI BROUGHT HIS PRIMITIVE CRAFT TO GROUND NEAR THE THREE WRECKED LOKAN MACHINES.
WHO WAS IT WHO SAID WE WERE NOT A MATCH FOR THE LOKAN AIR-FLEET?

YOU HAVE SEEN NOTHING OF THE LOKAN AIR FLEET IN ACTION- *YET!* WAIT TILL OUR MASSED, HIGH-LEVEL BOMBERS COME!

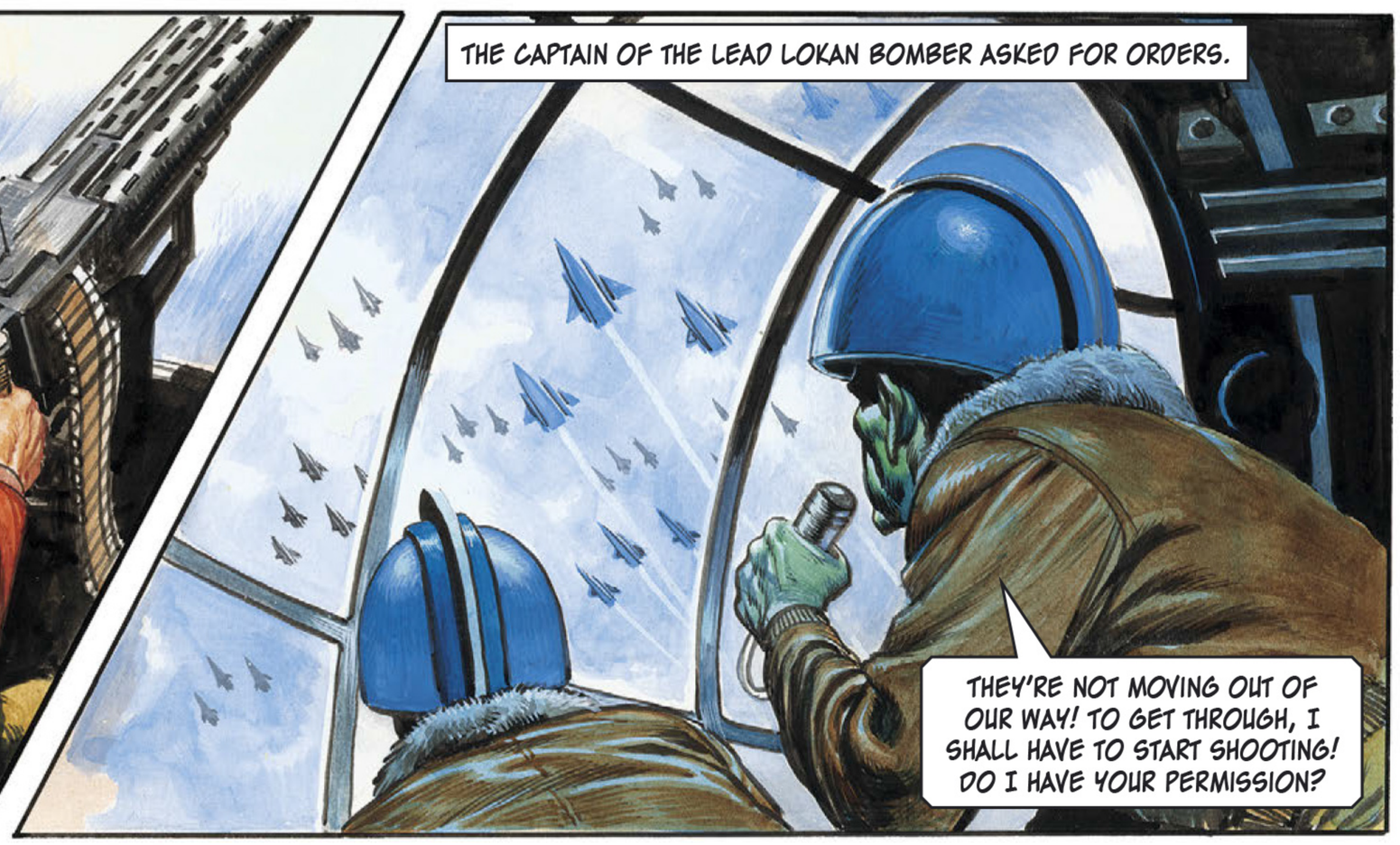
RETURNING TO BASE, THE REMAINING CREWMEN WERE GIVEN A TONGUE-LASHING BY THEIR AIR FLEET COMMANDER.
HOW MANY CRAFT ATTACKED YOU AND DOWNED YOUR THREE COMPANIONS?
ER... ONE, SIR.
DID YOU SAY... *ONE?*

GET THE HIGH-LEVEL BOMBING FORCE INTO THE AIR! BY THE END OF THIS DAY I WANT TO SEE *AN EMPTY VALLEY-STREWN WITH CORPSES!*

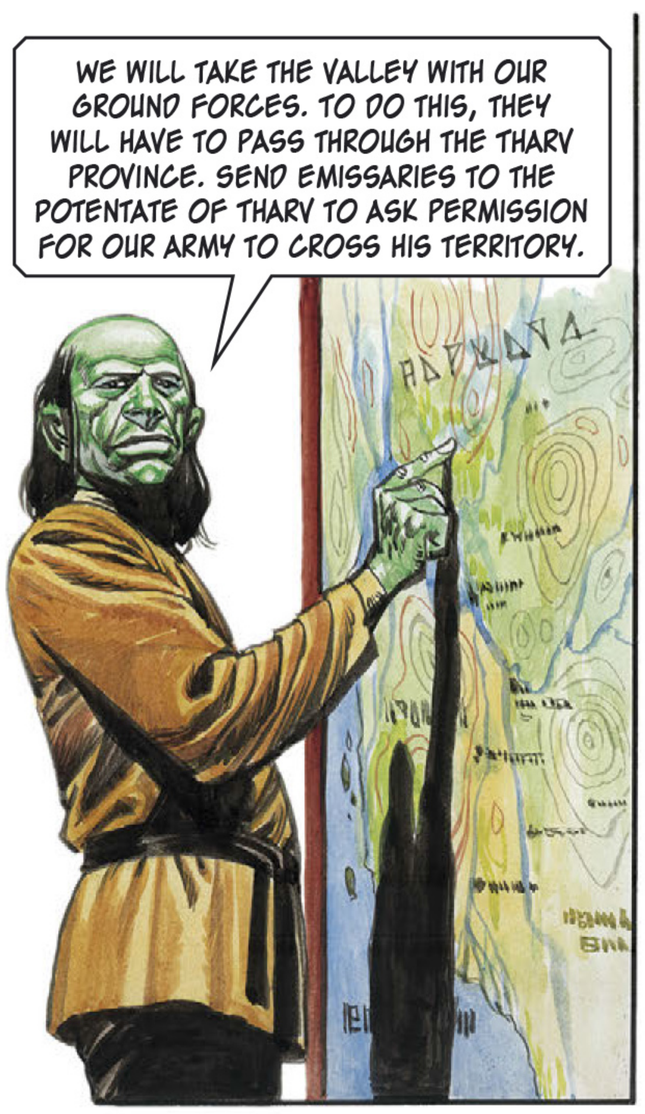

THE VAST ARMADA OF DESTRUCTION ROSE SKYWARDS ABOVE LOKA CITY.
SET COURSE FOR THE VALLEY.
LATER, THE CAPTAIN OF THE LEAD CRAFT SAW SOMETHING THAT BROUGHT A GASP OF DISBELIEF TO HIS LIPS.
OH, NO! IT- IT CAN'T BE!


BARRING THE PATH OF THE LOKAN ARMADA WAS A MASSED FORCE OF DEADLY FIGHTER-CRAFT.
THE TRIGANS!

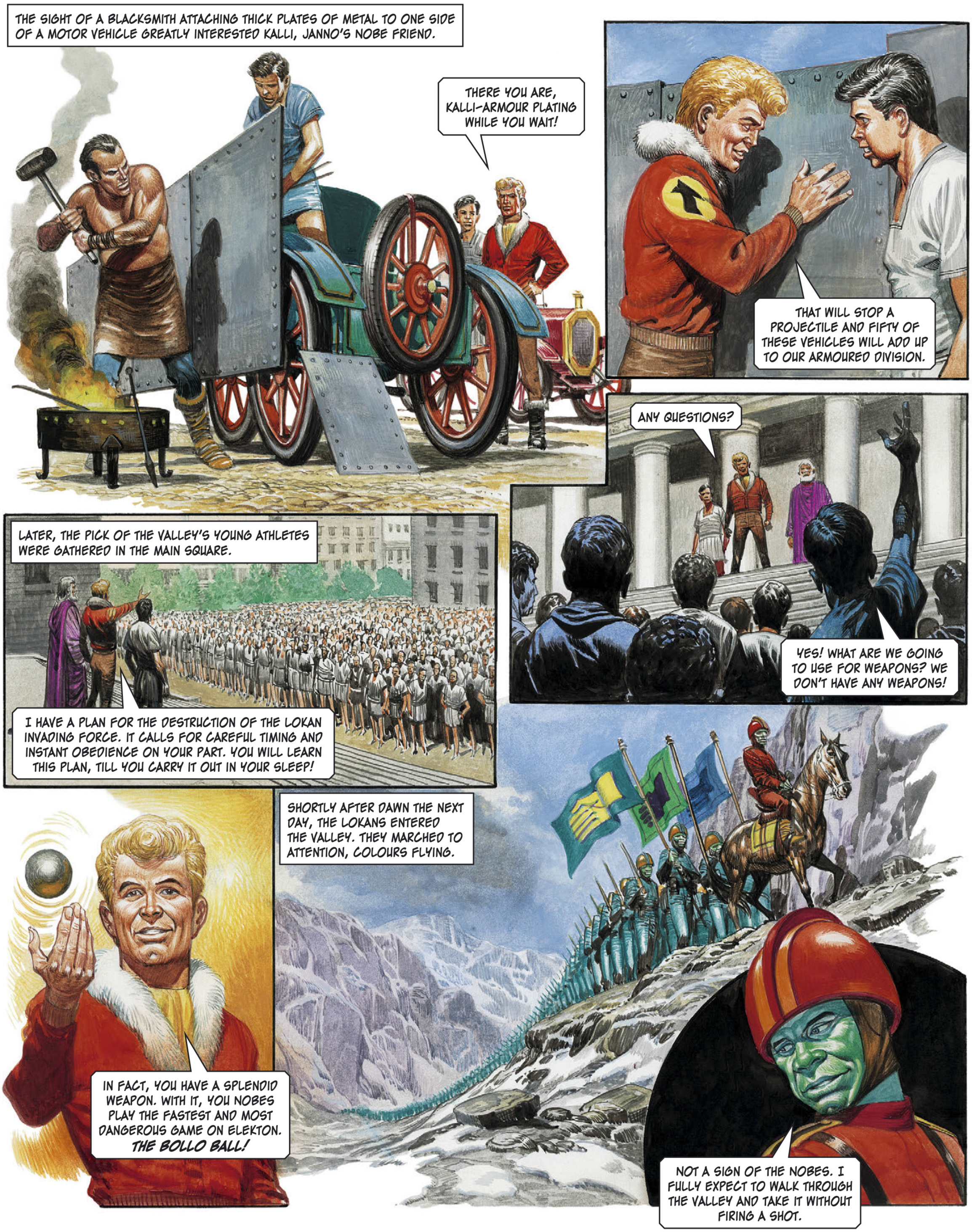
THE EMPEROR'S BROTHER, BRAG, IN THE LEAD FIGHTER, WAS IN CONTACT WITH TRIGO.
THEY'VE SEEN US! THE QUESTION NOW IS-WILL THEY RISK DESTRUCTION AND CONTINUE OR WILL THEY TURN BACK?


THE CAPTAIN OF THE LEAD LOKAN BOMBER ASKED FOR ORDERS.
THEY'RE NOT MOVING OUT OF OUR WAY! TO GET THROUGH, I SHALL HAVE TO START SHOOTING! DO I HAVE YOUR PERMISSION?

IT WAS A TENSE MOMENT BACK AT LOKAN HIGH COMMAND.
PRIME MINISTER, ARE WE READY TO GO TO WAR WITH THE TRIGAN EMPIRE FOR THE SAKE OF AN OBSCURE VALLEY?
EVEN IF THIS VALLEY CONTAINS THE RICHEST MINERAL RESOURCES ON THE PLANET?
THERE ARE OTHER METHODS OF GETTING THE VALLEY. CALL BACK THE BOMBER FORCE!
BREAK OFF THE OPERATION! RETURN TO BASE!


WE WILL TAKE THE VALLEY WITH OUR GROUND FORCES. TO DO THIS, THEY WILL HAVE TO PASS THROUGH THE THARV PROVINCE. SEND EMISSARIES TO THE POTENTATE OF THARV TO ASK PERMISSION FOR OUR ARMY TO CROSS HIS TERRITORY.

ZED KRAKKAR, THE WILY OLD POTENTATE OF THARV, HELD HIS RAMSHACKLE EMPIRE TOGETHER BY PLAYING OFF ONE MAJOR FOREIGN POWER AGAINST THE OTHER.
SIT DOWN, GENTLEMEN. OF COURSE YOUR SOLDIERS MAY PASS THROUGH MY PROVINCE.
THE PASSING OF SUCH A LARGE FORCE WILL, OF COURSE, CAUSE HAVOC WITH THE ROADS...
SHALL WE SAY TEN MILLION THULLARS COMPENSATION? AND NO ARMOUR... ONLY INFANTRY.
BUT, EXCELLENCY...
NO ARMOUR! I HAVE A TREATY WITH THE TRIGAN EMPIRE THAT FORBIDS THE PASSING OF FOREIGN ARMOURED TROOPS THROUGH MY TERRITORY.
A FULL REPORT OF ALL THIS TORTUOUS DIPLOMACY WAS BROUGHT TO JANNO AND PERIC IN THE VALLEY OF THE NOBES.
SO THE OLD DEMON'S LETTING THEM THROUGH- BUT NO ARMOURED WAR-MACHINES.
WHAT DOES IT MATTER? THE LOKANS ARE SENDING 10,000 PICKED TROOPS AND THE NOBES HAVE NOTHING TO STOP THEM.
WE CAN RAISE 10,000 STRONG YOUNG NOBES... CAN'T WE, KALLI?
YES! THEY DON'T KNOW WHAT THE WORD WAR MEANS BUT YOU CAN TEACH THEM.
AT THAT MOMENT THEY WERE INTERRUPTED BY A DISTURBANCE IN THE STREET...
GET OUT OF THE WAY! I- I CAN'T STOP IT!
IT WAS THEN THAT JANNO HAD HIS BRAINWAVE.
YES! WE'LL RAISE A NOBE ARMY AND OUR ARMY WILL BE MOBILE! WITH MOTORISED INFANTRY AND ARMOURED WAR-MACHINES!


THE SIGHT OF A BLACKSMITH ATTACHING THICK PLATES OF METAL TO ONE SIDE OF A MOTOR VEHICLE GREATLY INTERESTED KALLI, JANNO'S NOBE FRIEND.
THERE YOU ARE, KALLI-ARMOUR PLATING WHILE YOU WAIT!
THAT WILL STOP A PROJECTILE AND FIFTY OF THESE VEHICLES WILL ADD UP TO OUR ARMOURED DIVISION.
ANY QUESTIONS?
YES! WHAT ARE WE GOING TO USE FOR WEAPONS? WE DON'T HAVE ANY WEAPONS!
LATER, THE PICK OF THE VALLEY'S YOUNG ATHLETES WERE GATHERED IN THE MAIN SQUARE.
I HAVE A PLAN FOR THE DESTRUCTION OF THE LOKAN INVADING FORCE. IT CALLS FOR CAREFUL TIMING AND INSTANT OBEDIENCE ON YOUR PART. YOU WILL LEARN THIS PLAN, TILL YOU CARRY IT OUT IN YOUR SLEEP!
SHORTLY AFTER DAWN THE NEXT DAY, THE LOKANS ENTERED THE VALLEY. THEY MARCHED TO ATTENTION, COLOURS FLYING.
IN FACT, YOU HAVE A SPLENDID WEAPON. WITH IT, YOU NOBES PLAY THE FASTEST AND MOST DANGEROUS GAME ON ELEKTON. THE BOLLO BALL!
NOT A SIGN OF THE NOBES. I FULLY EXPECT TO WALK THROUGH THE VALLEY AND TAKE IT WITHOUT FIRING A SHOT.

AND THEN...

VEHICLES!

THE NOBE ARMOURED DIVISION WAS HEADING INTO BATTLE!

YAHOOOOO!

DON LAWRENCE

WITH DISCIPLINED CALM, THE LOKAN GUARDS HALTED, FACED THEIR FLANK AND THE COMMAND RANG OUT...

OPEN FIRE!

THE NOBE ARMOUR DROVE AT BREAKNECK SPEED DOWN THE LOKAN COLUMN, ATTRACTING ALL THE ENEMY FIRE.

IT WAS THEN, BEHIND THE LOKANS, THAT THE BEST BOLLO PLAYERS IN THE VALLEY ROSE FROM THEIR HIDING PLACE IN A DRIED RIVER BED AND SENT THEIR HARD METAL BALLS ROCKETING TOWARDS THE ENEMY.

THE LOKAN GUARDS WERE TAKEN ENTIRELY UNAWARES BY THE MOST DANGEROUS GAME ON ELEKTON.

AAAAAAGH!

UUUUGHHH!

A THOUSAND BOLLO PLAYERS SENT THEIR METAL BALLS ROCKETING TOWARDS THE ENEMY.
HAH!
TOO LATE, THE LOKAN COMMANDER SAW THE NEW SOURCE OF ATTACK.
TURN AND FACE THE REAR!
IT WAS THEN THAT JANNO, LEADING THE NOBE 'ARMOURED DIVISION', GAVE THE ORDER...
OPEN FIRE ON- UUUUUUGH!
TURN! CHA- A-A-ARGE!
THE CAREERING VEHICLES TORE THROUGH THE CRUMBLING LINE OF THE LOKAN GUARDS, SCATTERING THEM LIKE LEAVES.
LONG LIVE THE NOBES!
IT WAS A BRIEF BUT DESPERATE HAND-TO-HAND STRUGGLE.
FREEDOM! FREEDOM!

PRESENTLY, IT WAS ALL OVER. THE CREAM OF THE LOKAN GROUND FORCES SURRENDERED TO AN ARMY OF AMATEUR SPORTSMEN.
WE DID IT! THANKS TO BOLLO!
THANKS TO YOU, JANNO!
GO BACK TO YOUR MASTERS AND TELL THEM WHAT HAPPENED! TELL THEM THAT THIS VALLEY WILL NEVER BELONG TO LOKA!
THE LESSON WAS NOT LOST ON THE LOKAN LEADERS. A FEW DAYS LATER, THEIR PRIME MINISTER CAME TO A DECISION.
LATER, THE EMPEROR TRIGO PAID A STATE VISIT TO THE VALLEY, WHERE HE WAS COURTEOUSLY RECEIVED BY THE NOBES.
GREETINGS, ENLIGHTENED ONE!
GREETINGS, IMPERIAL MAJESTY. THANKS TO YOU... TO THE TRIGAN EMPIRE – AND TO OUR YOUNG FRIEND JANNO – WE REMAIN FREE!
THIS COUNTRY HAS LOST ENOUGH INTERNATIONAL PRESTIGE OVER THE AFFAIR. THE VALLEY PROJECT IS ABANDONED.
TELL ME, MAJESTY... IS IT WITHIN THE COMPETENCE OF YOUR PEOPLE'S TECHNOLOGY TO SEAL UP THE VALLEY AGAIN?
OF COURSE, ENLIGHTENED ONE.
THEN WE ASK YOU TO DO THAT FOR US. WE HAVE SEEN WHAT HAPPENS IN THE OUTSIDE WORLD AND, WITH RESPECT, WE LIKE OUR OLD WAYS BEST.
AND SO, A HEAVY CHARGE OF EXPLOSIVE WAS DETONATED IN THE PASS. THE MOUNTAIN WALL FELL–AND THE SECRET VALLEY WAS SECRET ONCE MORE.
WHEN ALL WAS SILENT, JANNO RAISED HIS HAND IN SALUTE TO THOSE HE WOULD NEVER SEE AGAIN.
FAREWELL, KALLI. FAREWELL, BRAVE NOBES. MAY YOU AND YOURS LIVE IN PEACE AND TRANQUILLITY FOR EVER!

LIX

THE TRIGAN EMPIRE

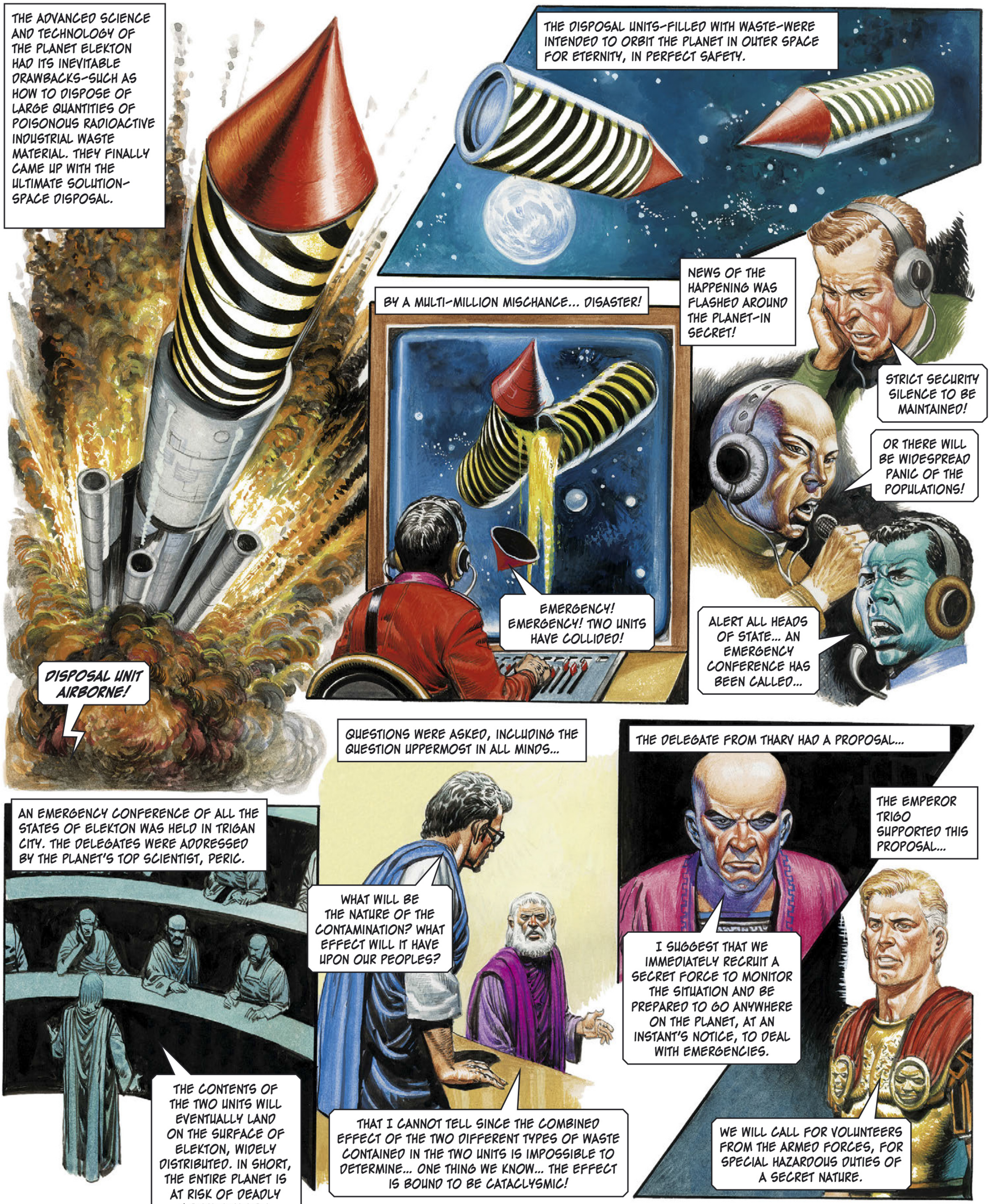
THE FALL-OUT MENACE

Originally published in ***Look and Learn*** 748 - 752

15th May 1976 – 12th June 1976

Story by Mike Butterworth

Art by Don Lawrence


THE ADVANCED SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY OF THE PLANET ELEKTON HAD ITS INEVITABLE DRAWBACKS-SUCH AS HOW TO DISPOSE OF LARGE QUANTITIES OF POISONOUS RADIOACTIVE INDUSTRIAL WASTE MATERIAL. THEY FINALLY CAME UP WITH THE ULTIMATE SOLUTION-SPACE DISPOSAL.
THE DISPOSAL UNITS-FILLED WITH WASTE-WERE INTENDED TO ORBIT THE PLANET IN OUTER SPACE FOR ETERNITY, IN PERFECT SAFETY.
BY A MULTI-MILLION MISCHANCE... DISASTER!
NEWS OF THE HAPPENING WAS FLASHED AROUND THE PLANET-IN SECRET!
STRICT SECURITY SILENCE TO BE MAINTAINED!
OR THERE WILL BE WIDESPREAD PANIC OF THE POPULATIONS!
DISPOSAL UNIT AIRBORNE!
EMERGENCY! EMERGENCY! TWO UNITS HAVE COLLIDED!
ALERT ALL HEADS OF STATE... AN EMERGENCY CONFERENCE HAS BEEN CALLED...
AN EMERGENCY CONFERENCE OF ALL THE STATES OF ELEKTON WAS HELD IN TRIGAN CITY. THE DELEGATES WERE ADDRESSED BY THE PLANET'S TOP SCIENTIST, PERIC.
THE CONTENTS OF THE TWO UNITS WILL EVENTUALLY LAND ON THE SURFACE OF ELEKTON, WIDELY DISTRIBUTED. IN SHORT, THE ENTIRE PLANET IS AT RISK OF DEADLY CONTAMINATION.
QUESTIONS WERE ASKED, INCLUDING THE QUESTION UPPERMOST IN ALL MINDS...
WHAT WILL BE THE NATURE OF THE CONTAMINATION? WHAT EFFECT WILL IT HAVE UPON OUR PEOPLES?
THAT I CANNOT TELL SINCE THE COMBINED EFFECT OF THE TWO DIFFERENT TYPES OF WASTE CONTAINED IN THE TWO UNITS IS IMPOSSIBLE TO DETERMINE... ONE THING WE KNOW... THE EFFECT IS BOUND TO BE CATACLYSMIC!
THE DELEGATE FROM THARV HAD A PROPOSAL...
THE EMPEROR TRIGO SUPPORTED THIS PROPOSAL...
I SUGGEST THAT WE IMMEDIATELY RECRUIT A SECRET FORCE TO MONITOR THE SITUATION AND BE PREPARED TO GO ANYWHERE ON THE PLANET, AT AN INSTANT'S NOTICE, TO DEAL WITH EMERGENCIES.
WE WILL CALL FOR VOLUNTEERS FROM THE ARMED FORCES, FOR SPECIAL HAZARDOUS DUTIES OF A SECRET NATURE.

THAT SAME DAY, A NOTICE APPEARED AT THE TRIGAN AIR FLEET BASE. JANNO AND HIS FELLOW-PILOTS, KEREN AND ROFFA, WERE AMONG THE FIRST TO SEE IT.
WHAT'S THIS... THEY WANT VOLUNTEERS FOR A NASTY JOB!
WELL, WHAT DO YOU THINK?
ANYTHING FOR A CHANGE-LET'S PUT OUR NAMES DOWN!
A LUNAR MONTH PASSED. EARLY ONE MORNING, IN THE VORG MOUNTAINS, AN OLD COUPLE WERE PICKING A WILD PLANT GREATLY ESTEEMED BY TRIGANS.
LATER, THEY SOLD THE PLANT-CALLED FORUS-IN THE MARKET PLACE OF TRIGAN CITY.
LOVELY FORUS, FRESH THIS MORNING!
SOME TIME LATER, JARROS FROM THE FLAT UPSTAIRS CALLED IN TO SEE HIS NEIGHBOUR-AND RECEIVED THE SHOCK OF HIS LIFE!
ARE YOU THERE, SOLLUM, OLD FELLOW?
SOLLUM! WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
NO! AAAAGHH!
A CLERK IN THE CITY TREASURER'S OFFICE BY THE NAME OF SOLLUM COOKED SOME FOR HIS MORNING MEAL.
THEY SMELL FINE! I BET OLD JARROS IN THE FLAT UPSTAIRS WILL WISH HE WAS JOINING ME.

A DESPAIRING SCREAM SPLIT THE MORNING AIR ABOVE THE CITY.

EEEEEAAAAGHH!

LOOK!

DON'T LOOK!

OOOOH!

SHORTLY AFTER, JANNO LANDED HIS SLEEK FIGHTING-CRAFT AT THE AIR BASE.

LIEUTENANT JANNO... REPORT TO THE CONTROL TOWER AT ONCE-TOP PRIORITY!

DON LAWRENCE

JANNO WAS PUZZLED, TILL HE REMEMBERED THAT HE HAD RECENTLY VOLUNTEERED FOR 'SPECIAL HAZARD DUTIES OF A SECRET NATURE'.

YOU ARE TO REPORT TO THIS ADDRESS-IN CIVILIAN CLOTHES-IMMEDIATELY!

THE ADDRESS WAS THAT OF A LARGE HOUSE CLOSE BY THE IMPERIAL PALACE. HE KNOCKED ON THE DOOR AND...

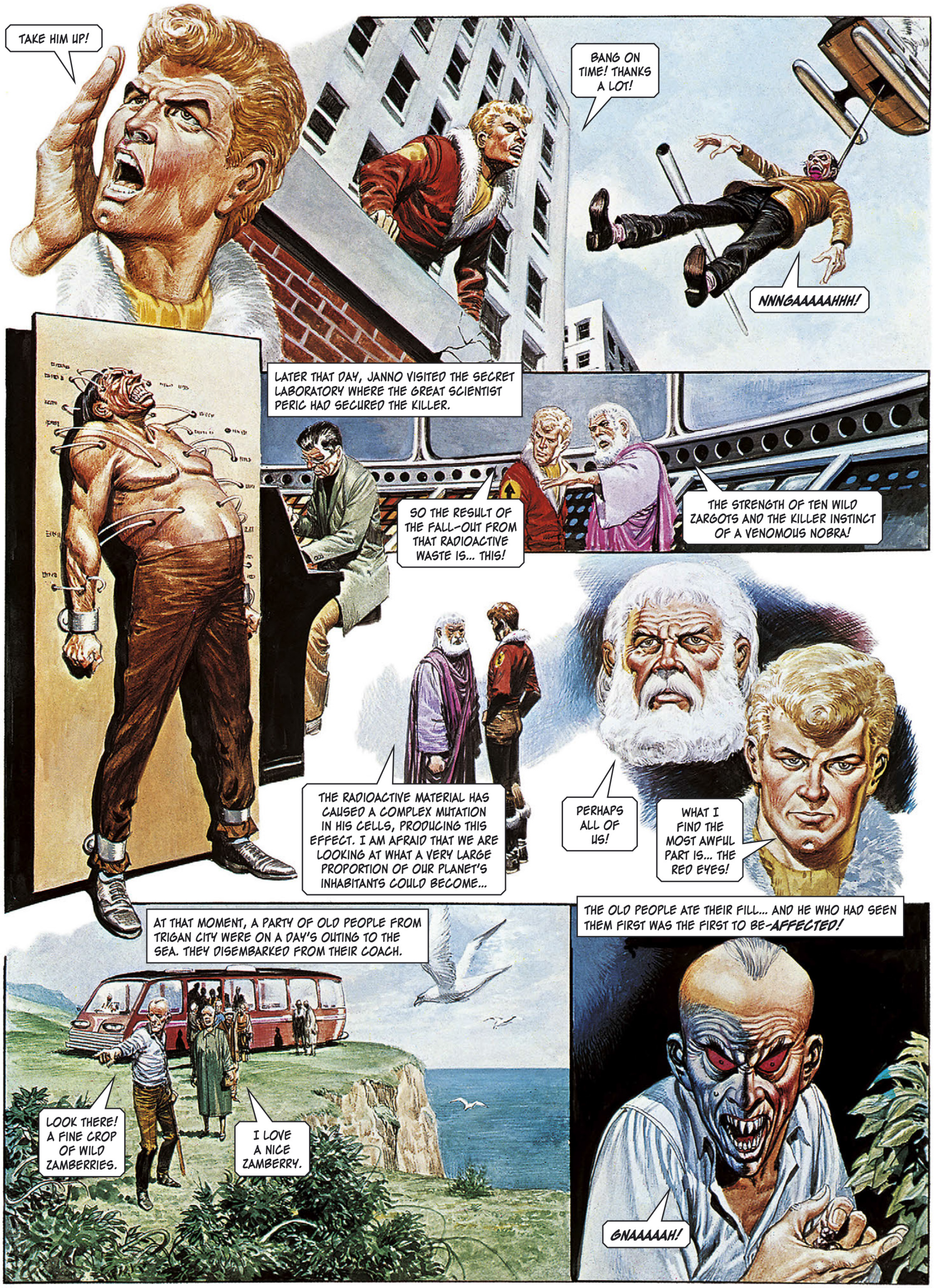
JANNO? COME IN!

PERIC!

BE SEATED, MY FRIEND. THERE IS VERY LITTLE TIME AND I HAVE MUCH TO TELL YOU.

BRIEFLY, THE GREAT SCIENTIST TOOK JANNO THROUGH THE SECRET NEWS OF THE DISASTER IN SPACE AND THE STEPS THAT WERE BEING TAKEN TO COMBAT IT.
IF THIS RADIOACTIVE WASTE IS GOING TO CONTAMINATE THE WHOLE PLANET AND HAVE A TERRIBLE EFFECT ON THE PEOPLE IT REACHES, THEN WHY NOT WARN PEOPLE?
THE PLANET-WIDE PANIC THAT FOLLOWED WOULD NOT IN ANY WAY AFFECT THE OUTCOME. AND WE BELIEVE THE TROUBLE HAS ALREADY STARTED.
EARLIER THIS MORNING, A MILD-MANNERED CLERK THREW HIS FRIEND AND NEIGHBOUR TO HIS DEATH FROM THE ROOF OF HIS APARTMENT BLOCK!
AND YOU THINK HE WAS AFFECTED BY THE FALL-OUT FROM SPACE?
IT IS POSSIBLE, EVEN PROBABLE. YOUR TASK, JANNO, WILL BE TO ENTER THAT BUILDING AND OVERPOWER THE CLERK, SOLLUM, SO THAT WE CAN DETERMINE THE NATURE OF HIS CONTAMINATION.
THAT SHOULDN'T BE TOO DIFFICULT, PERIC.
MY YOUNG FRIEND, I KNOW THAT YOU ARE A STAR ATHLETE AS WELL AS AN ACE PILOT OF THE AIR FLEET... BUT YOU WILL BE WELL ADVISED TO TREAT THIS SOLLUM AS A BEAST OF THE WILDERNESS-RUTHLESS, CUNNING AND DEADLY!
SHORTLY AFTER, THE CROWDS THAT HAD GATHERED NEAR THE FATEFUL APARTMENT BLOCK SAW THE ARRIVAL OF JANNO...
JANNO ALIGHTED ON THE FLAT ROOF.
NO SIGN OF FRIEND, SOLLUM...
AND THEN IT WAS AS IF HE HAD BEEN SEIZED BY A GIANT HAND AND HURLED HEADLONG.
THEY'RE PUTTING SOMEONE INTO THE BUILDING!
WHAT CAN BE GOING ON IN THAT PLACE?
HE'S GOT MORE COURAGE THAN I HAVE!
AAAAAAAGH!

THE EYES THAT BURNED OUT AT THE YOUNG AIR FLEET PILOT WERE THOSE OF A MADDENED BEAST.
JANNO DUCKED FOR COVER–BUT STILL THE 'CREATURE' PURSUED HIM.
GAAAAAHHH!
NNNGAAAAAHHH!
DESPERATELY, JANNO RASPED A MESSAGE INTO HIS THROAT MICROPHONE...
JANNO DUCKED THE FIRST WILD SWIPE AND SNATCHED AT THE TRAILING HOOK, WHICH HE ATTACHED TO SOLLUM'S BELT.
AS THE RED-EYED KILLER SWUNG HIS MAKESHIFT CLUB, JANNO SAW THE HELI-JET COMING IN LOW.
CALLING THE HELI-JET! COME IN LOW WITH YOUR HOOK TRAILING! THIS IS AN EMERGENCY!
NOW FOR IT!
UGH!


TAKE HIM UP!
BANG ON TIME! THANKS A LOT!
NNNGAAAAAHHH!
LATER THAT DAY, JANNO VISITED THE SECRET LABORATORY WHERE THE GREAT SCIENTIST PERIC HAD SECURED THE KILLER.
SO THE RESULT OF THE FALL-OUT FROM THAT RADIOACTIVE WASTE IS... THIS!
THE STRENGTH OF TEN WILD ZARGOTS AND THE KILLER INSTINCT OF A VENOMOUS NOBRA!
THE RADIOACTIVE MATERIAL HAS CAUSED A COMPLEX MUTATION IN HIS CELLS, PRODUCING THIS EFFECT. I AM AFRAID THAT WE ARE LOOKING AT WHAT A VERY LARGE PROPORTION OF OUR PLANET'S INHABITANTS COULD BECOME...
PERHAPS ALL OF US!
WHAT I FIND THE MOST AWFUL PART IS... THE RED EYES!
AT THAT MOMENT, A PARTY OF OLD PEOPLE FROM TRIGAN CITY WERE ON A DAY'S OUTING TO THE SEA. THEY DISEMBARKED FROM THEIR COACH.
LOOK THERE! A FINE CROP OF WILD ZAMBERRIES.
I LOVE A NICE ZAMBERRY.
THE OLD PEOPLE ATE THEIR FILL... AND HE WHO HAD SEEN THEM FIRST WAS THE FIRST TO BE-AFFECTED!
GNAAAAAH!

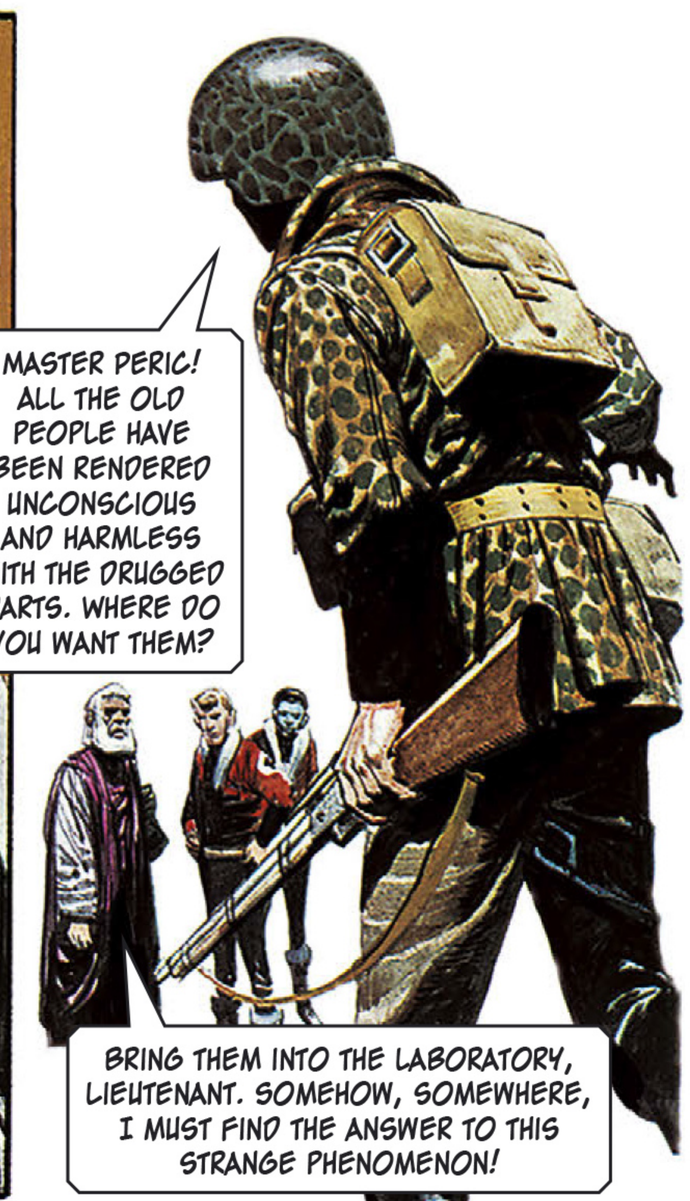
FROM A PATROLLING TRIO OF FIGHTING-CRAFT HIGH ABOVE TRIGAN CITY, THERE CAME A MESSAGE...
CALLING GREEN LEADER. LIEUTENANTS JANNO, ROFFA AND KEREN ARE TO RETURN TO BASE IMMEDIATELY! THIS IS A SPECIAL EMERGENCY!
IN THE LEAD CRAFT, JANNO'S NERVES TAUTENED. HE COMMUNICATED WITH HIS WINGERS.
I BET THERE'S BEEN ANOTHER VICTIM-OR VICTIMS-OF THE FALL-OUT!
LET'S GO, JANNO!
THE THREE PILOTS REPORTED TO THE TOP SECRET HEADQUARTERS WHERE THE GREAT SCIENTIST PERIC WAS AWAITING THEM.
WE'VE GOT ABOUT TWELVE OF THEM ON OUR HANDS NOW! IT'S LIKE HAVING A DOZEN PREHISTORIC MONSTERS ON THE RAMPAGE.
WHO ARE THEY, PERIC?
"SOMETHING HAPPENED TO THEM THIS MORNING AND NOW THEY'RE TERRORISING A SMALL HOLIDAY RESORT DOWN ON THE COAST."
A PARTY OF OLD PEOPLE ON A DAY'S OUTING TO THE SEA!
GAAAAAAH!
NAAAAAGH!
"A POLICE PATROL TRIED TO DEAL WITH THEM," CONTINUED PERIC, "AND CAME OFF BADLY."
EEEEEEH!

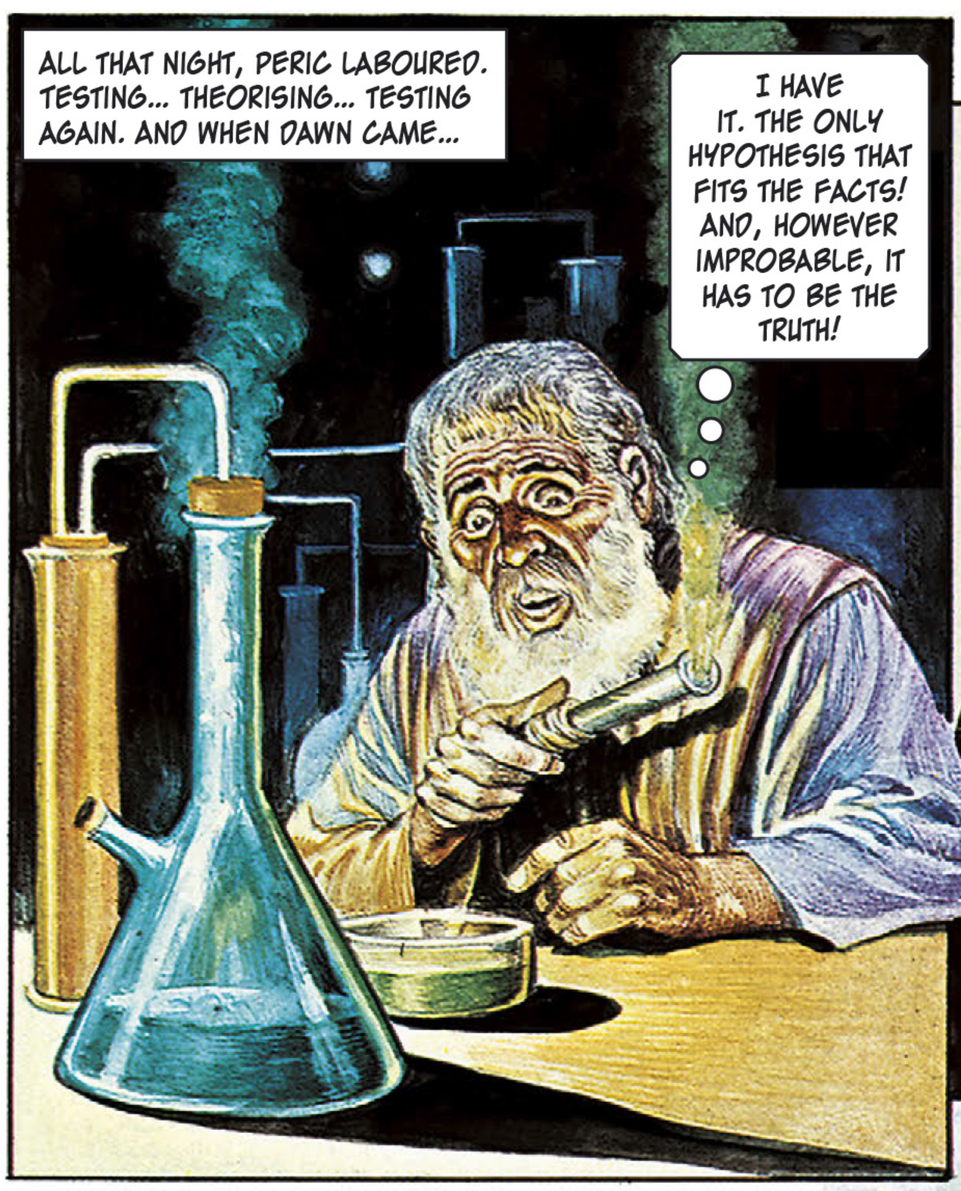
NEWS OF THIS HAPPENING MUST NOT LEAK OUT OR WE SHALL BE FACED WITH A WORLD-WIDE PANIC. THOSE VICTIMS MUST BE CAPTURED AND BROUGHT IN FOR EXAMINATION. THIS IS THE WEAPON YOU WILL USE—THE GUN THAT FIRES A DRUGGED DART!
SHORTLY AFTER MIDDAY, THE THREE VOLUNTEERS WERE DROPPED INTO THE HOLIDAY RESORT.
NOT A SIGN OF ANYONE!
THEY LANDED, TOOK COVER AND HAD A BRIEF COUNCIL-OF-WAR.
ROFFA AND I WILL CIRCLE THE TOWN AND COME BACK THIS WAY DOWN THE MAIN STREET. YOU KEEP US COVERED, KEREN.
RIGHT, JANNO.
SLOWLY, CAREFULLY, THE TWO CREPT FORWARD.
SEE ANYTHING, ROFFA?
ROFFA'S EYES WERE AS RED AS FIRE AND GLEAMING WITH ANIMAL FRENZY!
ROFFA, I SAID CAN YOU- AAAH!
GNAAAAAAGGGH!
NAAAAAGH!
THE SCOURGE FROM SPACE HAD STRUCK AGAIN!

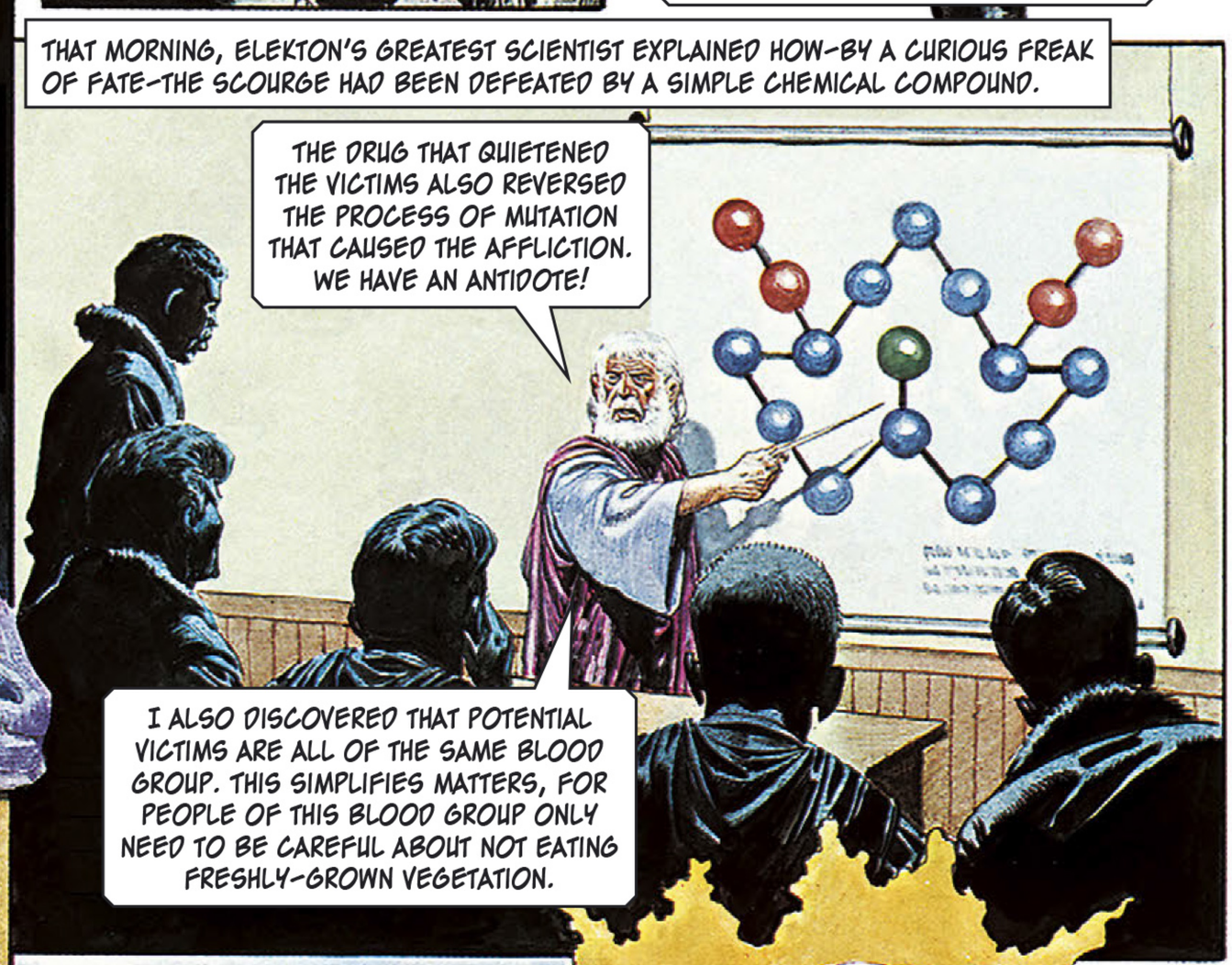
WITH AN ANIMAL-LIKE HOWL OF FURY, ROFFA THREW HIMSELF AT HIS FRIEND.
GNNNNNGHH!
JANNO DUCKED AND FIRED HIS RIFLE FROM THE HIP.
THE DRUGGED DART CONTAINED IN THE HARMLESS PROJECTILE SWIFTLY DID ITS WORK... BUT AS JANNO STOOPED TO GATHER UP HIS UNCONSCIOUS COMRADE, HE HEARD A SUDDEN SERIES OF FRENZIED SCREAMS.
DON LAWRENCE
THE PARTY OF OLD PEOPLE, MADDENED BY THE FALL-OUT, CAME VBOUNDING TOWARDS THEIR INTENDED VICTIMS.
GAAAAAH
NGAAAAAH!
GRAB HOLD OF YOUR FRIEND AND LET'S GO!
AT THE LAST MOMENT, THE PILOT FROM THE HELI-JET DESCENDED.
KILL! KILL!
YAAAAAGH!

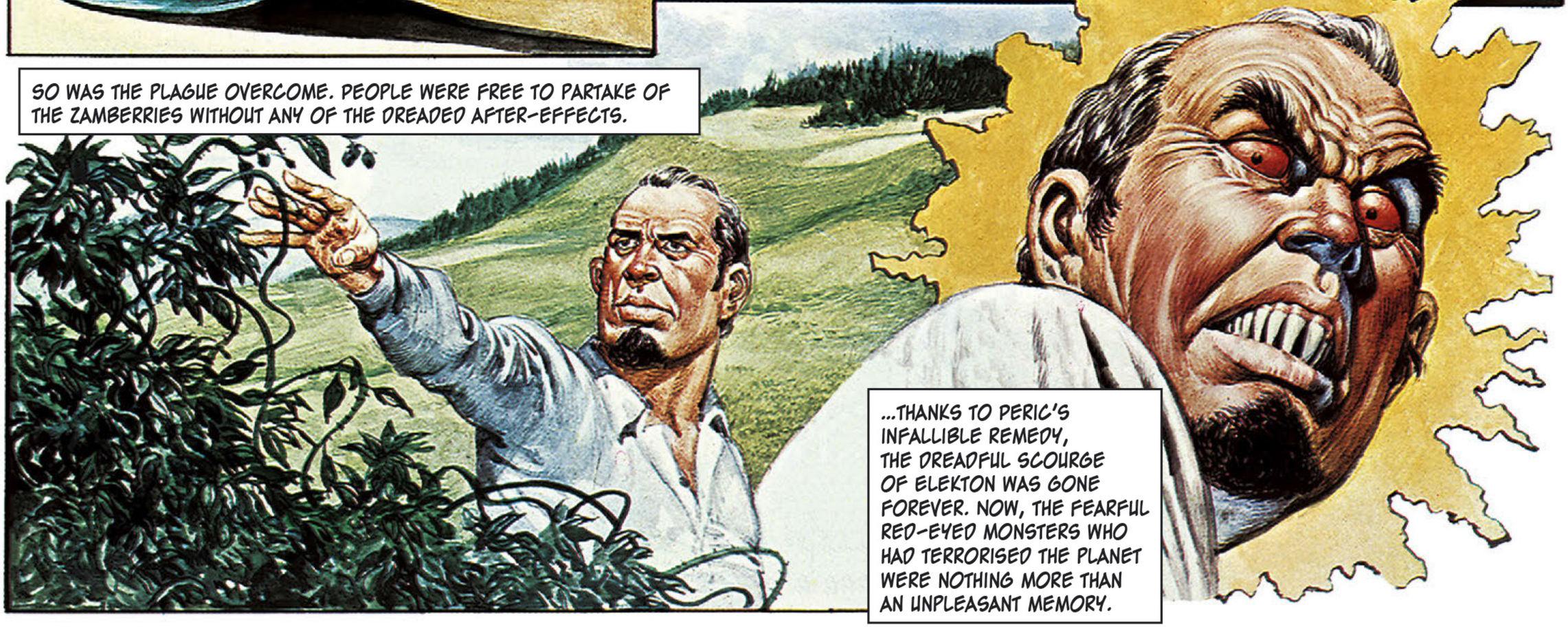
LATER, IN TRIGAN CITY, ELEKTON'S MOST FAMOUS SCIENTIST CARRIED OUT A SERIES OF TESTS ON ROFFA.
HE'S COMING ROUND. STAND WELL BACK. WITH THAT UNCANNY STRENGTH, HE MAY BURST HIS BONDS!

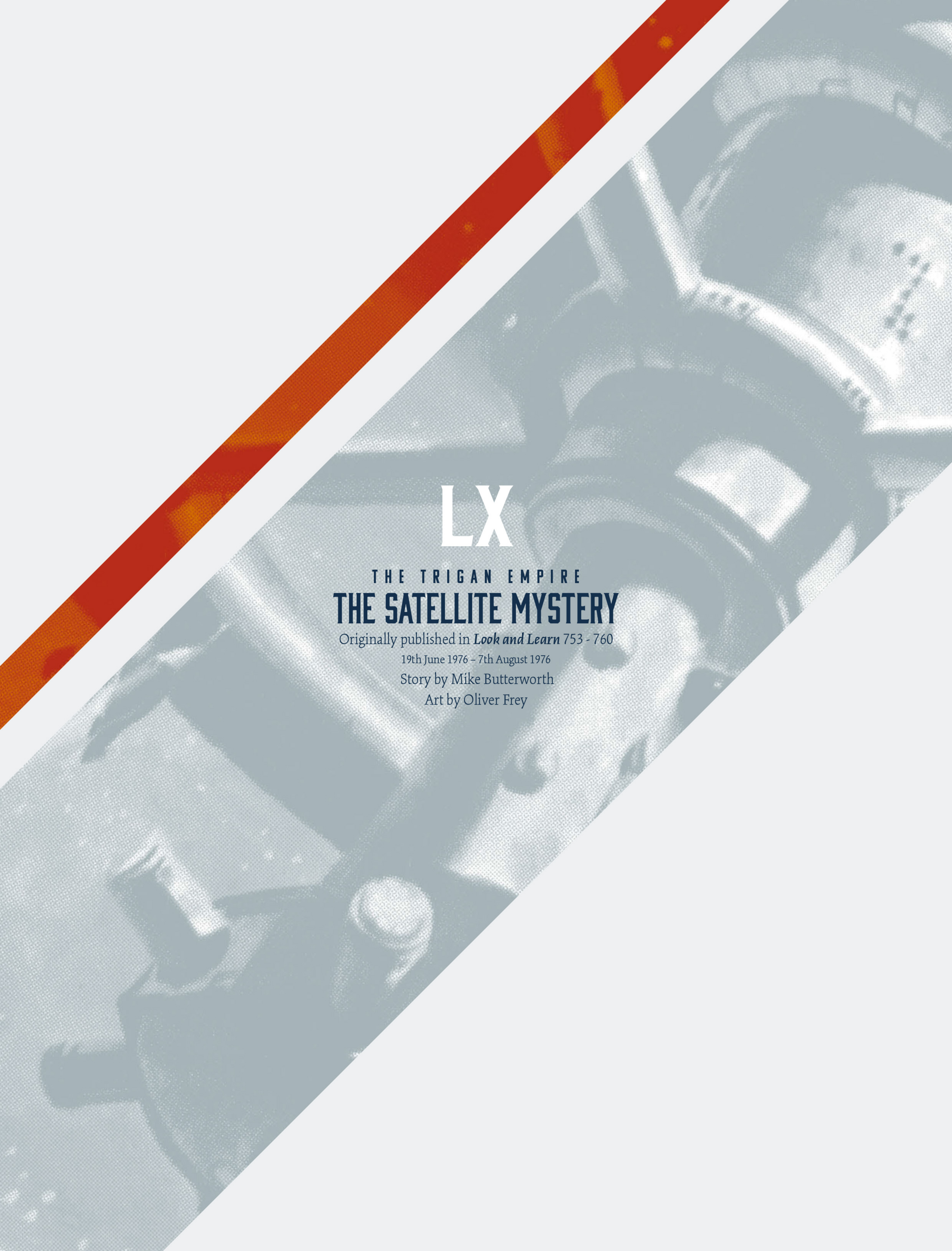
JANNO, OLD FRIEND. WHAT- WHAT HAPPENED?
THIS IS ASTOUNDING!


MASTER PERIC! ALL THE OLD PEOPLE HAVE BEEN RENDERED UNCONSCIOUS AND HARMLESS WITH THE DRUGGED DARTS. WHERE DO YOU WANT THEM?
BRING THEM INTO THE LABORATORY, LIEUTENANT. SOMEHOW, SOMEWHERE, I MUST FIND THE ANSWER TO THIS STRANGE PHENOMENON!


ALL THAT NIGHT, PERIC LABOURED. TESTING... THEORISING... TESTING AGAIN. AND WHEN DAWN CAME...
I HAVE IT. THE ONLY HYPOTHESIS THAT FITS THE FACTS! AND, HOWEVER IMPROBABLE, IT HAS TO BE THE TRUTH!


THAT MORNING, ELEKTON'S GREATEST SCIENTIST EXPLAINED HOW-BY A CURIOUS FREAK OF FATE-THE SCOURGE HAD BEEN DEFEATED BY A SIMPLE CHEMICAL COMPOUND.
THE DRUG THAT QUIETENED THE VICTIMS ALSO REVERSED THE PROCESS OF MUTATION THAT CAUSED THE AFFLICTION. WE HAVE AN ANTIDOTE!
I ALSO DISCOVERED THAT POTENTIAL VICTIMS ARE ALL OF THE SAME BLOOD GROUP. THIS SIMPLIFIES MATTERS, FOR PEOPLE OF THIS BLOOD GROUP ONLY NEED TO BE CAREFUL ABOUT NOT EATING FRESHLY-GROWN VEGETATION.


SO WAS THE PLAGUE OVERCOME. PEOPLE WERE FREE TO PARTAKE OF THE ZAMBERRIES WITHOUT ANY OF THE DREADED AFTER-EFFECTS.
...THANKS TO PERIC'S INFALLIBLE REMEDY, THE DREADFUL SCOURGE OF ELEKTON WAS GONE FOREVER. NOW, THE FEARFUL RED-EYED MONSTERS WHO HAD TERRORISED THE PLANET WERE NOTHING MORE THAN AN UNPLEASANT MEMORY.



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THE TRIGAN EMPIRE

THE SATELLITE MYSTERY

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Story by Mike Butterworth

Art by Oliver Frey

THE AIR FLEET BASE NEAR TRIGAN CITY WAS A SCENE OF COLOURFUL ACTIVITY. AN INSPECTION BY NO LESS THAN MARSHAL ROSSU, CHIEF OF THE MIGHTY TRIGAN AIR ARM.

IT WAS THE OCCASION OF THE EMPEROR'S BIRTHDAY. THE MARSHAL PAUSED FOR A WORD WITH THE EMPEROR'S NEPHEW JANNO.

AH, LIEUTENANT JANNO. YOU WILL, OF COURSE, BE ATTENDING THE RECEPTION AT THE PALACE AFTER THE FLY-PAST. JOIN ME AFTER WE LAND, AND ACCOMPANY ME IN MY AUTOMOBILE.

YES, EXCELLENCY, THANK YOU.

LATER, LED BY MARSHAL ROSSU'S ALL-RED FIGHTING CRAFT, JANNO AND HIS COMPANIONS FLEW IN TIGHT FORMATION OVER THE IMPERIAL PALACE...

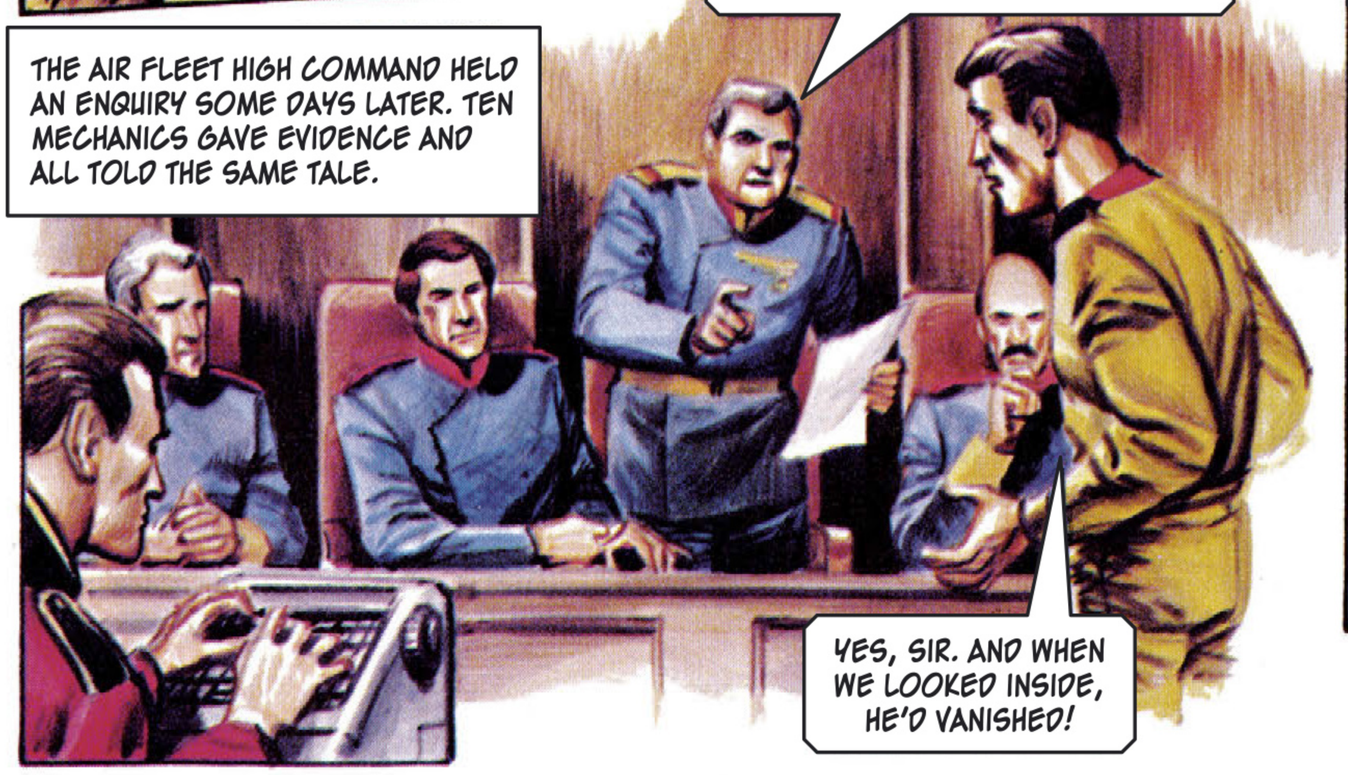
...WHERE THE EMPEROR TRIGO TOOK THE SALUTE.

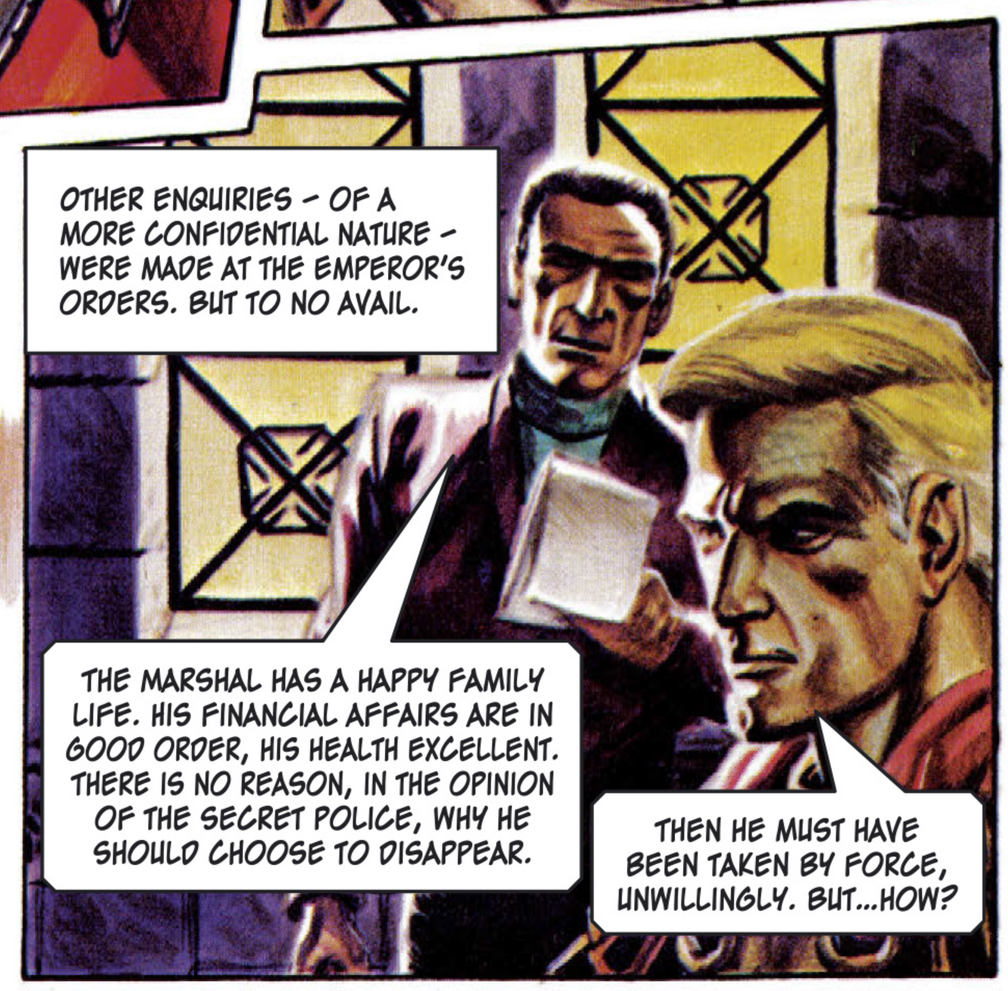
AFTER THE FLY-PAST, THE MARSHAL'S CRAFT WAS FIRST TO LAND.

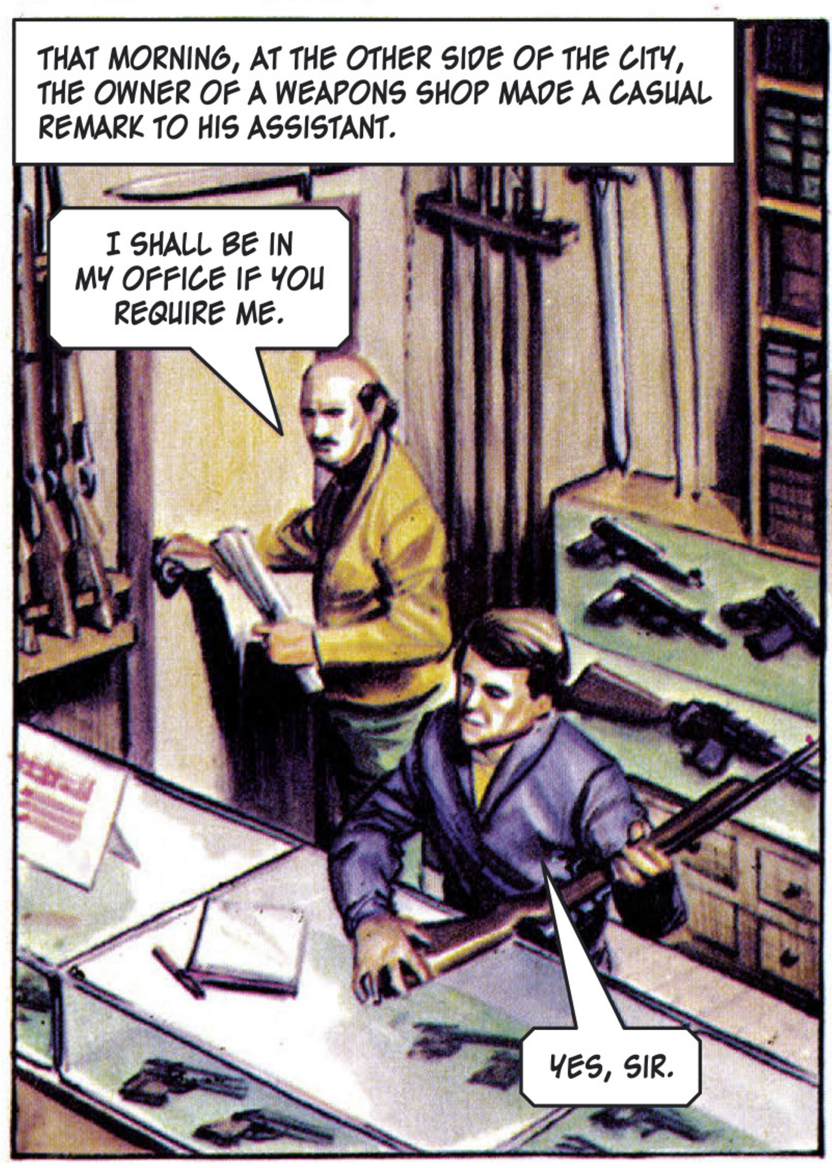
AND THEN, AS IT CAME TO A HALT...
HEY! WHERE'S THE PILOT?

THE MARSHAL! HE – HE'S DISAPPEARED!
NOTHING HERE BUT HIS FLYING KIT!

NEWS WAS BROUGHT TO THE EMPEROR.
HE CAN'T HAVE DISAPPEARED!
IT'S TRUE, UNCLE! ONE INSTANT HIS EXCELLENCY WAS AT THE CONTROLS, THE NEXT THERE WAS NOTHING LEFT BUT HIS HELMET AND GRAVITY-SUIT.


THE AIR FLEET HIGH COMMAND HELD AN ENQUIRY SOME DAYS LATER. TEN MECHANICS GAVE EVIDENCE AND ALL TOLD THE SAME TALE.
YOU WERE THE FIRST TO POINT OUT THAT THERE WAS NO PILOT IN THE CRAFT AS IT TAXIED TO A HALT?
YES, SIR. AND WHEN WE LOOKED INSIDE, HE'D VANISHED!

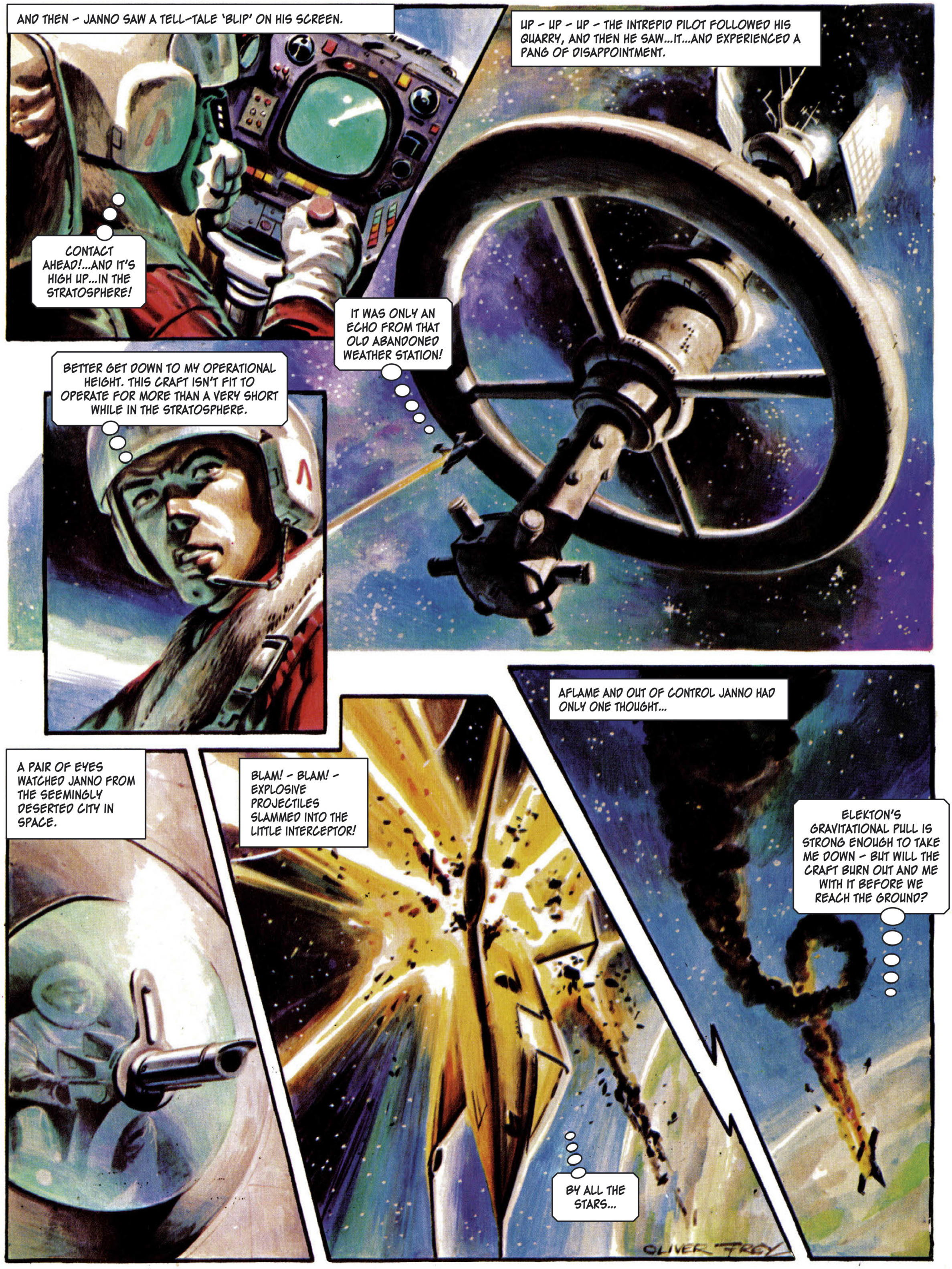

OTHER ENQUIRIES – OF A MORE CONFIDENTIAL NATURE – WERE MADE AT THE EMPEROR'S ORDERS. BUT TO NO AVAIL.
THE MARSHAL HAS A HAPPY FAMILY LIFE. HIS FINANCIAL AFFAIRS ARE IN GOOD ORDER, HIS HEALTH EXCELLENT. THERE IS NO REASON, IN THE OPINION OF THE SECRET POLICE, WHY HE SHOULD CHOOSE TO DISAPPEAR.
THEN HE MUST HAVE BEEN TAKEN BY FORCE, UNWILLINGLY. BUT...HOW?

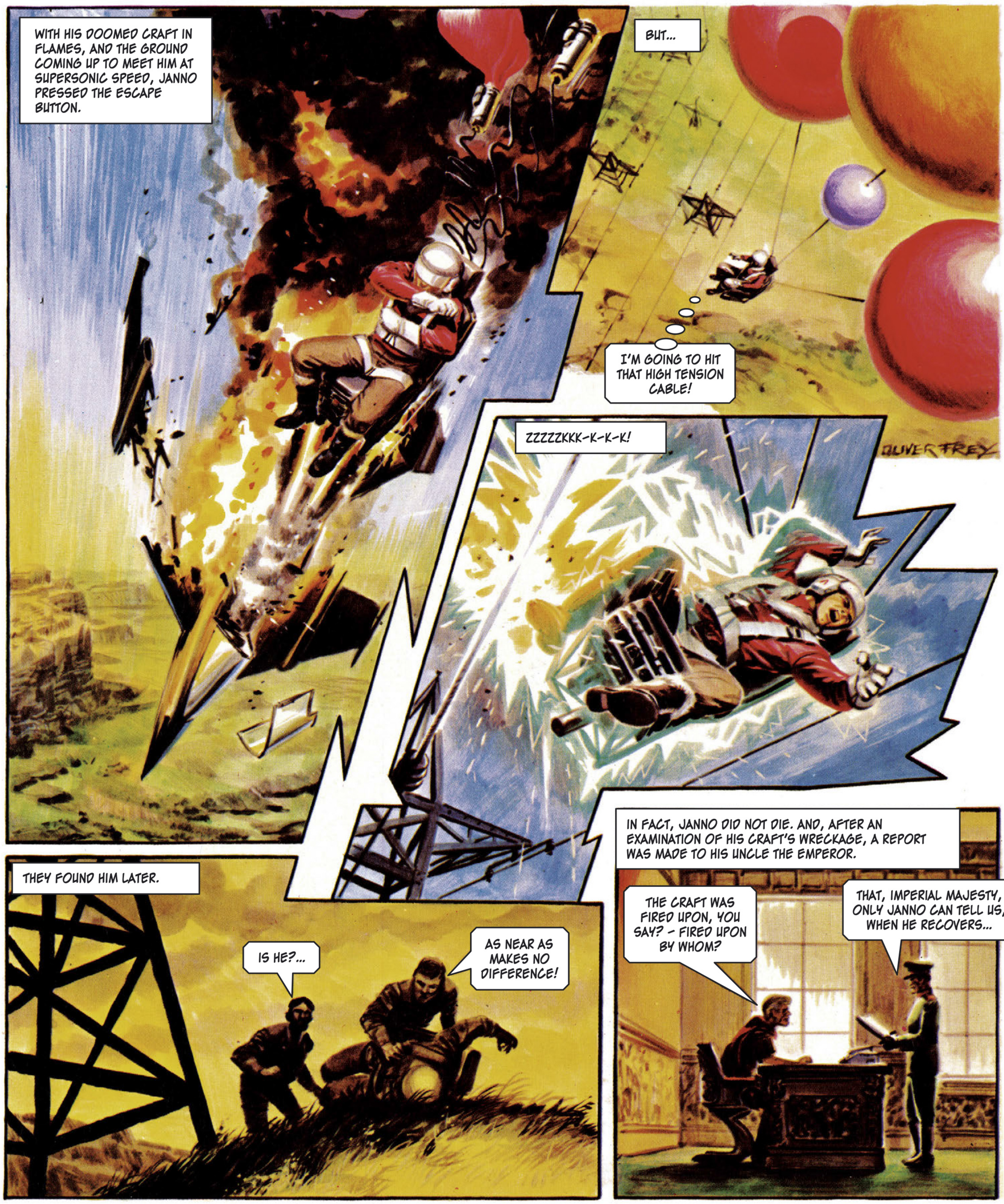

THAT MORNING, AT THE OTHER SIDE OF THE CITY, THE OWNER OF A WEAPONS SHOP MADE A CASUAL REMARK TO HIS ASSISTANT.
I SHALL BE IN MY OFFICE IF YOU REQUIRE ME.
YES, SIR.

SOME TIME LATER...
'SCUSE ME, SIR. A GENTLEMAN HERE WANTS TO BUY A...
BY ALL THE STARS!

WHAT'S THE MATTER?
MY BOSS HAS VANISHED, THAT'S WHAT! AND LEFT HIS CLOTHES BEHIND!

IT HAPPENED IN THE GREAT SQUARE OF TRIGAN CITY IN BROAD DAYLIGHT...
SPARE A COIN FOR AN OLD SOLDIER, MASTER.
DON'T PESTER ME, FELLOW!
SECOND THOUGHTS.
I WAS HARSH TO THAT BEGGAR...AFTER ALL, HE DID FIGHT FOR HIS COUNTRY.
BY ALL THE STARS! – HE'S VANISHED!
THERE WAS ONLY A RAGGED PILE OF CLOTHING – THAT, AND A HANDFUL OF SMALL COINS!
ALL THAT'S LEFT OF HIM! THIS IS – FANTASTIC!
MEANWHILE – AT AIR FLEETS BASE...
ALARM! ALARM! ALL INTERCEPTOR CRAFT GET AIRBORNE! UNIDENTIFIED INTRUDER IN SECTOR RED-ZERO-ZERO!
JANNO LED THE DASH TO THE WAITING INTERCEPTORS.
EVERY PILOT HAD HIS OWN ALTITUDE IN WHICH TO OPERATE. JANNO'S WAS AT THE VERY HIGHEST – IN THE SUB-STRATOSPHERE.
APPROACHING OPERATIONAL HEIGHT NOW... NOTHING IN SIGHT...


AND THEN – JANNO SAW A TELL-TALE 'BLIP' ON HIS SCREEN.
UP – UP – UP – THE INTREPID PILOT FOLLOWED HIS QUARRY, AND THEN HE SAW...IT...AND EXPERIENCED A PANG OF DISAPPOINTMENT.
CONTACT AHEAD!...AND IT'S HIGH UP...IN THE STRATOSPHERE!
IT WAS ONLY AN ECHO FROM THAT OLD ABANDONED WEATHER STATION!
BETTER GET DOWN TO MY OPERATIONAL HEIGHT. THIS CRAFT ISN'T FIT TO OPERATE FOR MORE THAN A VERY SHORT WHILE IN THE STRATOSPHERE.
AFLAME AND OUT OF CONTROL JANNO HAD ONLY ONE THOUGHT...
A PAIR OF EYES WATCHED JANNO FROM THE SEEMINGLY DESERTED CITY IN SPACE.
BLAM! – BLAM! – EXPLOSIVE PROJECTILES SLAMMED INTO THE LITTLE INTERCEPTOR!
ELEKTON'S GRAVITATIONAL PULL IS STRONG ENOUGH TO TAKE ME DOWN – BUT WILL THE CRAFT BURN OUT AND ME WITH IT BEFORE WE REACH THE GROUND?
BY ALL THE STARS...
OLIVER FRY


WITH HIS DOOMED CRAFT IN FLAMES, AND THE GROUND COMING UP TO MEET HIM AT SUPERSONIC SPEED, JANNO PRESSED THE ESCAPE BUTTON.
BUT...
I'M GOING TO HIT THAT HIGH TENSION CABLE!
OLIVER FREY
ZZZZZKKK-K-K-K!
THEY FOUND HIM LATER.
IS HE?...
AS NEAR AS MAKES NO DIFFERENCE!
IN FACT, JANNO DID NOT DIE. AND, AFTER AN EXAMINATION OF HIS CRAFT'S WRECKAGE, A REPORT WAS MADE TO HIS UNCLE THE EMPEROR.
THE CRAFT WAS FIRED UPON, YOU SAY? – FIRED UPON BY WHOM?
THAT, IMPERIAL MAJESTY, ONLY JANNO CAN TELL US, WHEN HE RECOVERS...

...IF HE RECOVERS!
ANOTHER MATTER FOR YOUR ATTENTION, IMPERIAL MAJESTY. WHILE ENQUIRING INTO THE STRANGE DISAPPEARANCE OF MARSHAL ROSSU, OUR COMPUTERS HAVE COME UP WITH A SERIES OF REMARKABLE COINCIDENCES.
EXPLAIN YOURSELF, COLONEL.

SEE, IMPERIAL MAJESTY – THERE HAS BEEN NO LESS THAN SEVEN OTHER DISAPPEARANCES IN THE LAST LUNAR MONTH.
YOU ARE SURELY NOT SUGGESTING SOME CONNECTION? WHAT POSSIBLE LINK EXISTS BETWEEN THE MARSHAL OF THE TRIGAN AIR FLEET AND...FOR INSTANCE... A BEGGAR?
THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE DISAPPEARANCES PROVIDES THE ONLY LINK SO FAR, IMPERIAL MAJESTY...
ALL SEVEN PERSONS WERE SEEN, APPARENTLY HALE AND HEARTY, IMMEDIATELY PRIOR TO VANISHING...
AND ALL LEFT THEIR OUTER CLOTHING BEHIND.

ROSSI WAS THE YOUNGEST SENATOR THE EMPIRE HAD EVER KNOWN, AND TIPPED FOR SUPREME MINISTER BEFORE HE WAS MUCH OLDER.
DO NOT WAIT FOR ME. I WILL FIND MY OWN WAY HOME.
YES, EXCELLENCY.

ROSSI HAD – A CERTAIN WEAKNESS...

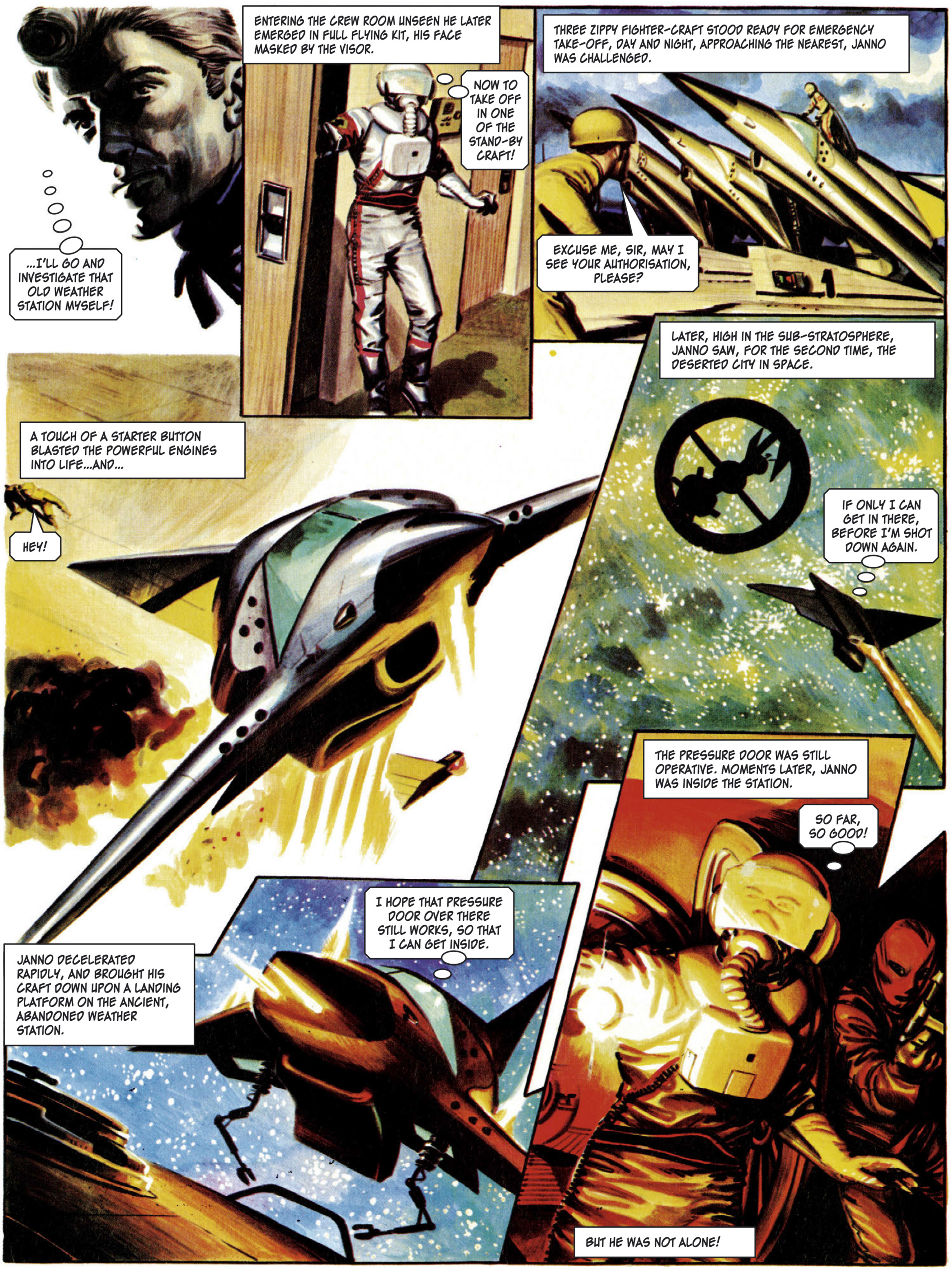
GAMBLING WAS HIS PASSION. HE PLAYED BADLY AND STAKED RECKLESSLY.
FOOL THAT I AM, I'M RUINED... RUINED!

BUT HELP WAS AT HAND. AS SOON AS ROSSI ARRIVED HOME, HE HAD A CALL.
...LISTEN CAREFULLY...
WHO ARE YOU?
THAT IS IMMATERIAL, EXCELLENCY. I AM A FRIEND. I AM WILLING TO PAY OFF ALL YOUR GAMBLING DEBTS – IN RETURN FOR A SIMPLE SERVICE THAT YOU MUST PERFORM FOR ME...

AFTER HE HAD HAD A LONG CONVERSATION WITH THE MYSTERY CALLER, SENATOR ROSSI REPLACED THE RECEIVER.
THIS IS FANTASTIC! BUT WHAT CAN I DO? EXCEPT OBEY HIM?
IMMEDIATELY, THE SENATOR DROVE OUT OF THE CITY IN HIS SUMPTUOUS AUTOMOBILE – WITHOUT, FOR ONCE, HIS UNIFORMED CHAUFFEUR.
AFTER ALL, HE HAS PLEDGED TO PAY ALL MY GAMBLING DEBTS, AND SAVE MY REPUTATION!
OLIVER FREY
IN A LONELY PART OF THE MOUNTAIN ROAD BEYOND TRIGAN CITY, ROSSI STOPPED THE VEHICLE. HE TOOK OFF HIS OUTER CLOTHES AND LAID THEM IN THE DRIVER'S SEAT.
I DON'T SEE THE SENSE OF IT BUT THIS IS WHAT HE TOLD ME TO DO.
AND THEN...
THERE IT GOES!
HARDLY HAD THE EXPENSIVE VEHICLE DASHED ITSELF TO SCRAP METAL ON THE ROCKS FAR BELOW THAN THE SOUND OF ENGINES MADE ROSSI LOOK UP.
THIS MUST BE – HIM!
THE NEXT MOMENT...
NICELY DONE, EXCELLENCY! AND NOW GET IN...ANIMAL!

EARLY THE NEXT MORNING, A GROUP OF FISHERMEN FOUND THE WRECKAGE OF THE SENATOR'S VEHICLE IN A MOUNTAIN STREAM.
THE DRIVER'S CLOTHES ARE HERE!
BUT HE NEVER COULD HAVE SURVIVED THAT AWFUL DROP!
THE REPORT OF THE DISAPPEARANCE OF ONE OF HIS MOST PROMISING POLITICIANS WAS BROUGHT TO THE EMPEROR TRIGO.
SENATOR ROSSI WAS SEEN LEAVING HIS VILLA, IMPERIAL MAJESTY, AND HEADING FOR THE MOUNTAIN ROAD. AND NOW – NOTHING BUT A PILE OF CLOTHES!
I REMIND YOU, IMPERIAL MAJESTY, THAT ROSSI MAKES THE EIGHTH.
A FEW DAYS LATER, JANNO RECOVERED CONSCIOUSNESS AFTER HIS CRASH.
THE ABANDONED WEATHER STATION... SOMEBODY... SOMEONE...
EASY NOW, LIEUTENANT. YOU NEED A LOT OF REST. DON'T TIRE YOURSELF!
HIS HALF-INCOHERENT BABBLINGS WERE EXAMINED BY THE STAFF OF AIR-FLEET HEADQUARTERS.
JANNO SAYS, AND WE ONLY HAVE HIS EVIDENCE, THAT HE WAS FIRED ON FROM THE OLD WEATHER STATION.
BUT THE ONLY FEASIBLE EXPLANATION, ACCORDING TO THE COMPUTER, IS THAT HE WAS FIRED ON FROM THE GROUND.
THAT WEATHER STATION HAS BEEN DESERTED FOR TEN LUNAR YEARS.
SEE ANY SIGN OF LIFE?
NEVERTHELESS, THE OLD WEATHER STATION IN THE STRATOSPHERE WAS GIVEN A CURSORY LOOK-OVER – FROM A DISTANCE.
BUT A PAIR OF HATE-FILLED EYES WATCHED BOTH AIRCRAFT LEAVE.
YOU MUST BE JOKING.
GOOD FOR YOU! IF YOU HAD STAYED AN INSTANT LONGER, I WOULD HAVE DESTROYED YOU BOTH – AS I DID THE OTHER!

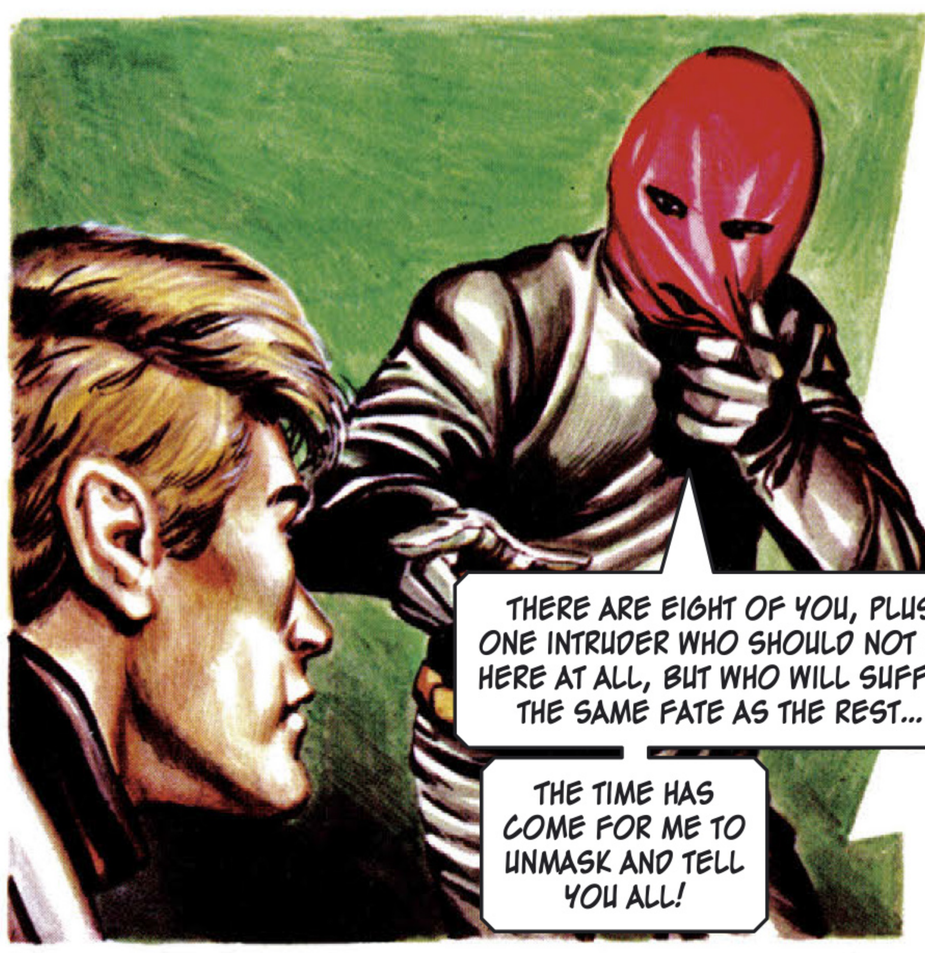
NIGHT TIME, SILENCE AND DARKNESS AS A DARK FIGURE EMERGED FROM AN UPPER WINDOW OF TRIGAN CITY HOSPITAL...
...AND EMBARKED ON A DIZZY DOWNWARD CLIMB.
SOME TIME LATER, A NIGHT NURSE MAKING HER ROUNDS SPOTTED THE EMPTY BED.
ALARM! ALARM! LIEUTENANT JANNO IS MISSING FROM HIS ROOM!
HE'S GONE!
OLIVER FREY
THAT ASSUMPTION WAS INCORRECT JANNO HAD LEFT OF HIS OWN ACCORD, AND FOR A VERY GOOD REASON. AT THAT MOMENT, HE WAS ENTERING AIR FLEET BASE.
THEY WON'T BELIEVE WHAT I TELL THEM. THEY TREAT ME AS IF I'M WANDERING IN MY MIND – AND SO...
NEWS WAS BROUGHT TO THE IMPERIAL PALACE, AND THE EMPEROR HIMSELF AWAKENED, TO HEAR OF HIS NEPHEW'S DISAPPEARANCE.
BUT I UNDERSTOOD JANNO HAD ONLY JUST COME OFF THE DANGER LIST, AND THE DOCTORS HAD PRESCRIBED SEVERAL MORE WEEKS OF COMPLETE REST AND QUIET.
THAT IS SO, IMPERIAL MAJESTY. I AM AFRAID WE MUST ASSUME THAT YOUR NEPHEW DID NOT LEAVE THE HOSPITAL OF HIS OWN FREE WILL.

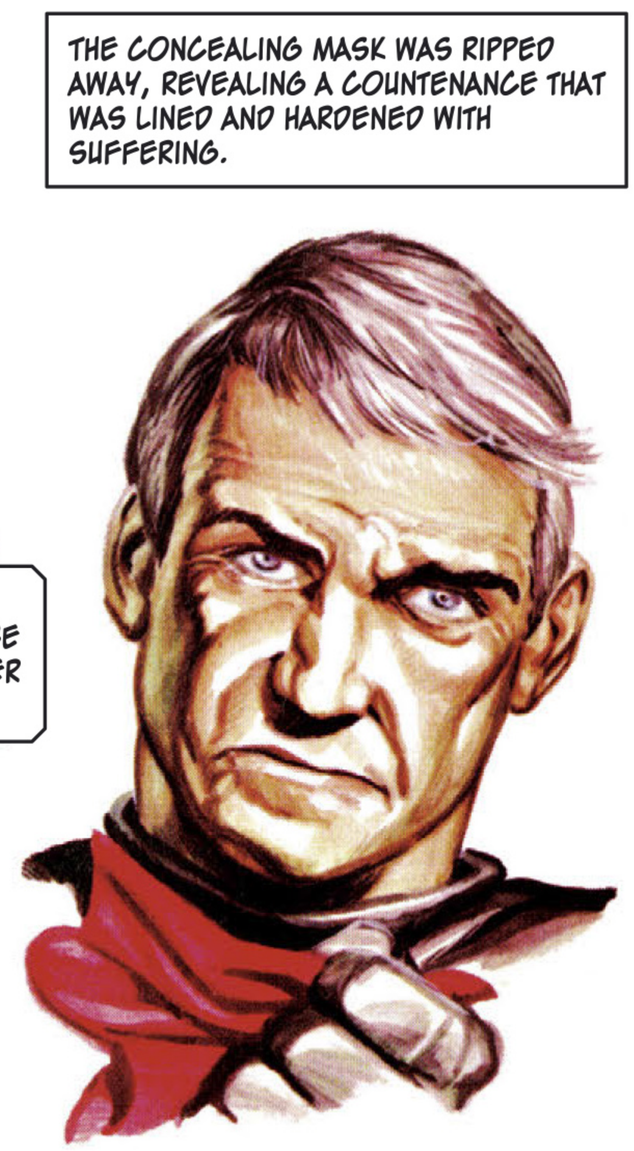

...I'LL GO AND INVESTIGATE THAT OLD WEATHER STATION MYSELF!
ENTERING THE CREW ROOM UNSEEN HE LATER EMERGED IN FULL FLYING KIT, HIS FACE MASKED BY THE VISOR.
NOW TO TAKE OFF IN ONE OF THE STAND-BY CRAFT!
THREE ZIPPY FIGHTER-CRAFT STOOD READY FOR EMERGENCY TAKE-OFF, DAY AND NIGHT, APPROACHING THE NEAREST, JANNO WAS CHALLENGED.
EXCUSE ME, SIR, MAY I SEE YOUR AUTHORISATION, PLEASE?
A TOUCH OF A STARTER BUTTON BLASTED THE POWERFUL ENGINES INTO LIFE...AND...
HEY!
LATER, HIGH IN THE SUB-STRATOSPHERE, JANNO SAW, FOR THE SECOND TIME, THE DESERTED CITY IN SPACE.
IF ONLY I CAN GET IN THERE, BEFORE I'M SHOT DOWN AGAIN.
THE PRESSURE DOOR WAS STILL OPERATIVE. MOMENTS LATER, JANNO WAS INSIDE THE STATION.
SO FAR, SO GOOD!
I HOPE THAT PRESSURE DOOR OVER THERE STILL WORKS, SO THAT I CAN GET INSIDE.
JANNO DECELERATED RAPIDLY, AND BROUGHT HIS CRAFT DOWN UPON A LANDING PLATFORM ON THE ANCIENT, ABANDONED WEATHER STATION.
BUT HE WAS NOT ALONE!

A SUDDEN BLOW DASHED JANNO SENSELESS.
UUUUH!
BACK IN TRIGAN CITY, JANNO'S DISAPPEARANCE HAD CAUSED THE EMPEROR TO SUMMON A SPECIAL MEETING TO DISCUSS HIS NEPHEW'S POSSIBLE FATE.
I THINK WE MAY TAKE IT THAT JANNO CAN BE COUNTED AS THE NINTH PERSON TO VANISH IN THIS STRANGE MANNER.
PRECISELY, IMPERIAL MAJESTY...
ELEKTON'S TOP SCIENTIST SMILED SAGELY.
THERE COMES A TIME, COLONEL, WHEN COMPUTER MACHINES, HOWEVER SOPHISTICATED, CANNOT COMPETE WITH...THE MIND!
I SHALL APPLY MY MIND TO THE PROBLEM!
...AND IT IS OF VITAL IMPORTANCE THAT WE DISCOVER IMMEDIATELY WHAT IS THE CONNECTION BETWEEN JANNO AND THOSE OTHER EIGHT UNFORTUNATES.
BUT, PERIC, THE COMPUTER MACHINES HAVE BEEN WORKING ON IT DAY AND NIGHT.
...JANNO RECOVERED CONSCIOUSNESS.
BY ALL THE STARS!
OUT ON THE EDGE OF SPACE, IN THE LONG ABANDONED WEATHER STATION...
OLIVER FREY

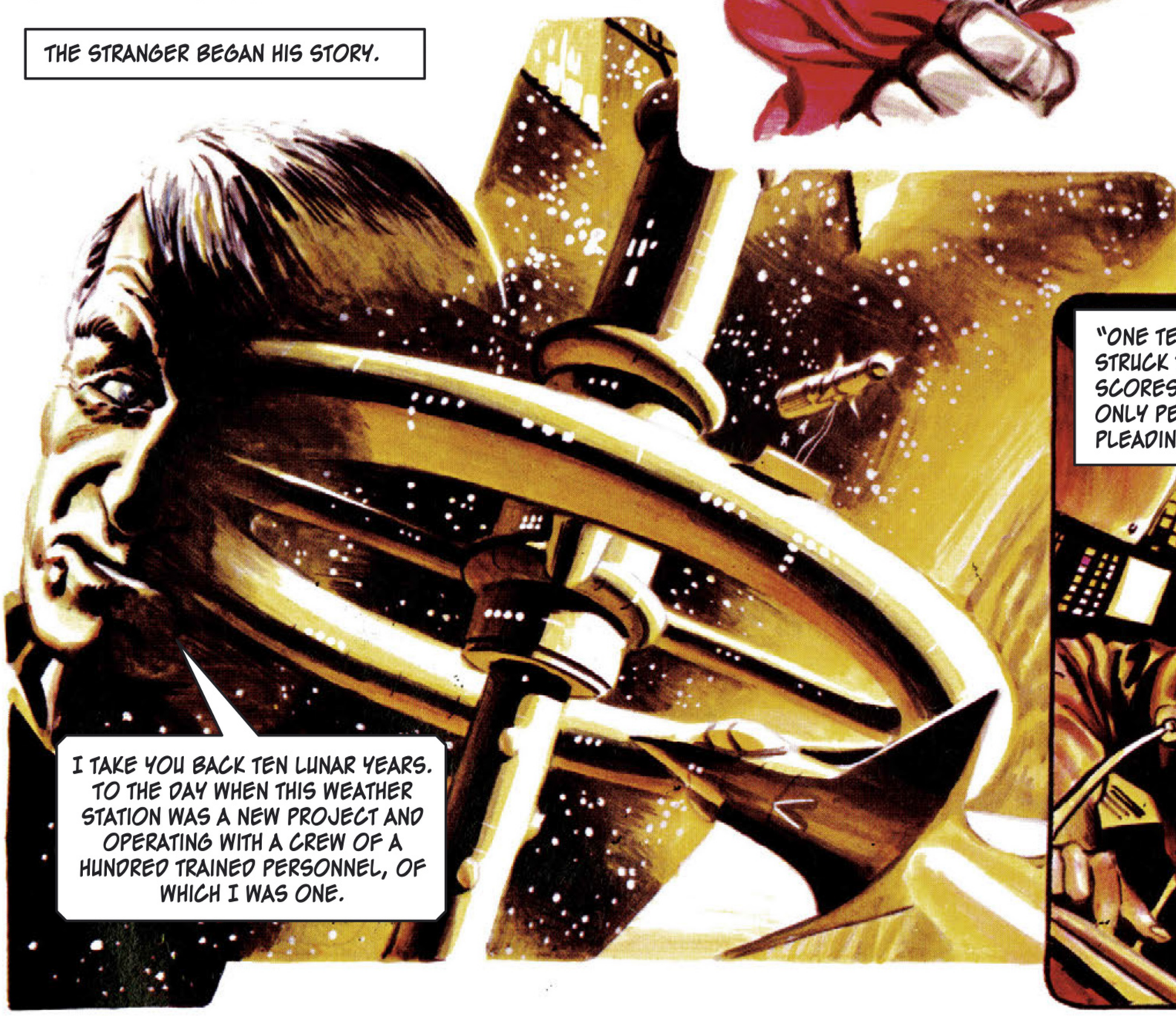
EIGHT PEOPLE REGARDED HIM, AND ONE MAN'S FACE WAS STARTLINGLY FAMILIAR.
MARSHAL ROSSU! WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE, EXCELLENCY?
I MIGHT ASK YOU THE SAME QUESTION, LIEUTENANT.

SUDDENLY – A NEWCOMER!
YOU! I DEMAND AN EXPLANATION AS TO WHY WE'VE BEEN TRICKED INTO COMING HERE.


THERE ARE EIGHT OF YOU, PLUS ONE INTRUDER WHO SHOULD NOT BE HERE AT ALL, BUT WHO WILL SUFFER THE SAME FATE AS THE REST...
THE TIME HAS COME FOR ME TO UNMASK AND TELL YOU ALL!


THE CONCEALING MASK WAS RIPPED AWAY, REVEALING A COUNTENANCE THAT WAS LINED AND HARDENED WITH SUFFERING.

WELL, DO YOU KNOW ME?
I NEVER SAW YOU BEFORE!


THE STRANGER BEGAN HIS STORY.
I TAKE YOU BACK TEN LUNAR YEARS. TO THE DAY WHEN THIS WEATHER STATION WAS A NEW PROJECT AND OPERATING WITH A CREW OF A HUNDRED TRAINED PERSONNEL, OF WHICH I WAS ONE.

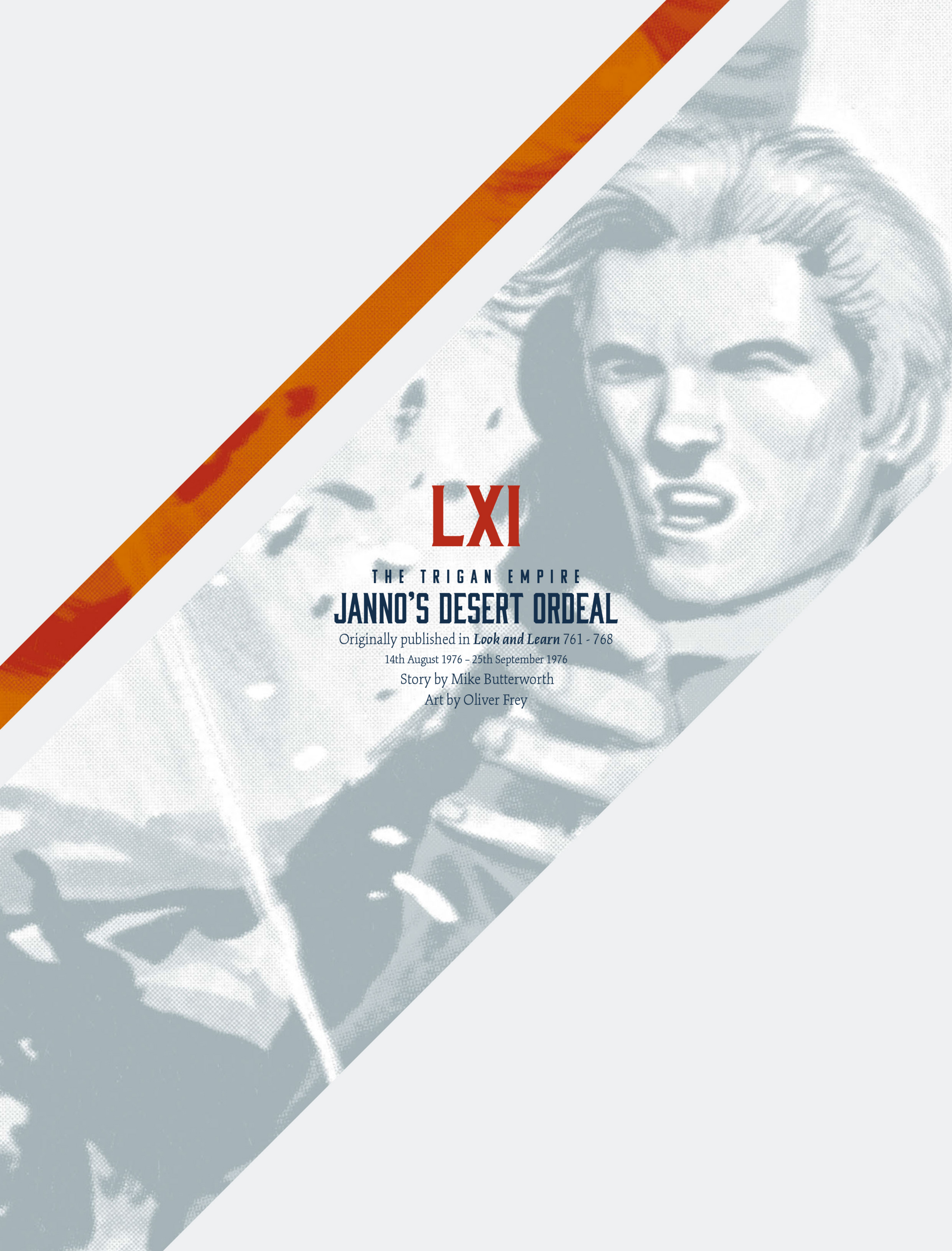
"ONE TERRIBLE DAY, A DEADLY VIRUS FEVER STRUCK THE CREW, LAYING THEM LOW IN THEIR SCORES. BY THE END OF THAT DAY, I WAS THE ONLY PERSON ALIVE AND ON MY FEET. AND PLEADING FOR HELP..."
COME TO OUR AID...COME TO OUR AID... PLEASE...PLEASE...

"ALONE IN THE STRICKEN WEATHER STATION, WITH ALL ABOUT ME DYING, I SENT MY MESSAGE OUT ACROSS THE ETHER."
HELP ME, PLEASE... SOMEONE... HELP!
"SOMEWHERE OUT THERE, A SUB-STRATOSPHERE PASSENGER CRUISER PICKED UP MY FEEBLE CALL."
HELLO, HELLO, WEATHER STATION... RECEIVING YOU...WHAT IS YOUR TROUBLE?
"I CAN IMAGINE WHAT TOOK PLACE BETWEEN THE CAPTAIN OF THE CRUISER AND HIS SECOND PILOT."
SIR, THEY'VE GOT THE VIRUS FEVER ABOARD THE WEATHER STATION! PRACTICALLY EVERYONE IS WIPED OUT AND THE SIGNAL OPERATOR WANTS US TO LAND THERE AND BRING HIM OFF.
THERE'S ONLY ONE THING FOR IT.
"INSTEAD OF TAKING THE DECISION HIMSELF, AS HE SHOULD HAVE, THE CAPTAIN CONSULTED EIGHT FRIGHTENED PEOPLE."
SO THERE YOU HAVE IT. DO WE LAND ON THE WEATHER STATION AND TAKE OFF THE SURVIVOR, AT THE RISK OF OURSELVES CONTRACTING THE VIRUS FEVER?
...I PUT IT TO THE VOTE!
NO!
NO!
NO!
AND I ADD MY OWN VOTE...NO!

"PICTURE MY HORROR AND DESPAIR WHEN I RECEIVED THEIR VERDICT."
CRUISER'S CAPTAIN SPEAKING. I'M SORRY FRIEND, BUT WE HAVE TAKEN A VOTE, AND WE THINK THE RISK IS TOO GREAT.
NO! NO! YOU CAN'T DO THIS TO ME!
YOU CAN'T ABANDON ME!
"THE SOLE SURVIVOR ON AN ABANDONED CITY IN MID-SPACE, WITH EVERYTHING I NEEDED TO SUSTAIN LIFE - FOOD, DRINK, WARMTH, PURIFIED AIR - EVERYTHING BUT FREEDOM. NOTHING BUT MIND-BENDING SOLITUDE."
FIVE LUNAR YEARS HAVE PASSED. I THINK ANOTHER FIVE YEARS WILL DRIVE ME INSANE!
OLIVER FREY
"MY SANITY WAS SAVED BY MY DISCOVERY - IN ONE OF THE MANY WELL-EQUIPPED WORKSHOPS - OF A DAMAGED AIR CRAFT. IN THE YEARS THAT FOLLOWED, I WORKED ON THE CRAFT, TO REPAIR IT."
ONE DAY, I'M GOING TO HAVE THIS FIT TO FLY. THEN IT'S BACK TO ELEKTON...
...AND VENGEANCE!
"YEARS LATER..."
IT IS READY!
AND NOW, TO FIND THOSE WHO CONDEMNED ME TO ALL THOSE YEARS OF TERRIBLE SOLITUDE...
...AND TO PAY THEM BACK IN KIND!
HIS STORY FINISHED, THE SPEAKER REGARDED HIS PRISONERS.
THE TEN-YEAR OLD CREW AND PASSENGER LIST TOLD ME ALL I NEEDED TO KNOW. FURTHER INVESTIGATION REVEALED THAT TWO OF THOSE PERSONS HAD DIED IN THE MEANTIME, BUT THAT EIGHT REMAINED, INCLUDING THE CAPTAIN OF THE CRUISER...
...NOW MARSHAL ROSSU, CHIEF OF THE TRIGAN AIR FLEET!

THE AVENGER POINTED TO MARSHAL ROSSU...
I BROUGHT YOU HERE, ONE BY ONE! ROSSU, I DISCOVERED THINGS ABOUT YOU THAT WOULD HAVE MEANT YOUR RUIN. YOU WERE ONLY TOO GLAD TO DO ANYTHING I DEMANDED OF YOU...
YOU WHO CONDEMNED ME TO TEN YEARS OF SOLITUDE ABOARD THIS ABANDONED HULK – ARE YOURSELVES GOING TO SPEND THE REST OF YOUR LIVES HERE!
HE EXPLAINED..."AT MY INSTRUCTIONS, YOU WORE THE YELLOW OVERALLS OF A MECHANIC ON THE DAY OF THE FLY-PAST. WHEN YOU LANDED, YOU SLIPPED OFF YOUR FLYING KIT AND CLAMBERED, UNSEEN, OUT OF THE CRAFT."
"YOU WERE THERE, LOST AMONG THE OTHER YELLOW-GARBED FIGURES, WHEN THEY MADE THEIR ASTOUNDING DISCOVERY."
THE MARSHAL – HE – HE'S DISAPPEARED!
NOTHING HERE BUT HIS FLYING KIT!
SIMILARLY WITH THE REST OF YOU. I PLAYED UPON YOUR INDIVIDUAL WEAKNESSES AND VICES, TO MAKE YOU DO MY BIDDING.
JANNO HAD BEEN LISTENING, SPELLBOUND, ONE QUESTION CAME TO HIS MIND.
BUT, WHY THE BIZARRE MANNER OF THE DISAPPEARANCES? SURELY, THE AUTHORITIES WILL FIND THE CONNECTION BETWEEN THESE EIGHT PEOPLE?
THAT IS MY HOPE. SOONER OR LATER, THE LINK BETWEEN THESE EIGHT WILL BE ESTABLISHED, AND ALL ELEKTON WILL KNOW OF MY VENGEANCE. BUT THAT WILL TAKE YEARS.

A KNIFE SLASHED THE BONDS THAT HELD JANNO.
AND NOW, I WILL FREE YOU ALL – TO BEGIN WHAT MAY WELL BE A LIFE IMPRISONMENT IN THIS ABANDONED HULK!
THE YOUNG TRIGAN REACTED LIKE A RELEASED SPRING – HE LEAPT!
NO LIFE IMPRISONMENT FOR ME, MY FRIEND!
THERE WAS A REPORT – BUT NOT FROM THE WEAPON THAT WAS AIMED AT JANNO...
IN THAT CASE, FOOL...
INTO THE COMPARTMENT STREAMED A CONTINGENT OF TRIGAN GUARDSMEN, AND THE SCIENTIST PERIC.
JANNO, MY YOUNG FRIEND! IT SEEMS THAT WE HAVE ARRIVED IN THE NICK OF TIME!
OLIVER FREY
JANNO STARED IN RELIEF AND ASTONISHMENT AT ELEKTON'S TOP SCIENTIST.
HOW DID YOU SOLVE THIS MYSTERY, PERIC?
IN MY OWN HEAD, JANNO. I QUICKLY REASONED THAT THE EIGHT MUST HAVE SOME CONNECTION IN THE PAST. BUT IT WAS YOUR CLAIM TO HAVE BEEN FIRED ON FROM THIS ABANDONED WEATHER STATION THAT PROVIDED THE MISSING CLUE.
THE EMPEROR TRIGO SMILED GRIMLY.
SOME TIME LATER...
THAT POOR FELLOW'S TRIAL WAS HELD TODAY. HAPPILY, I WAS ABLE TO PARDON HIM. AFTER ALL, HIS EXPERIENCE HAS CRUELLY UNBALANCED HIS MIND.
YOUR IMPERIAL MAJESTY IS MERCIFUL.
WHAT ABOUT MARSHAL ROSSU, UNCLE TRIGO? IT CAN SCARCELY BE SAID THAT HE'S COME OUT OF THIS AFFAIR WITH HIS REPUTATION INTACT.
FOLLOWING UPON A LITTLE HINT FORM MYSELF, MARSHAL ROSSU HAS RESIGNED FOR REASONS OF ILL-HEALTH!



LXI

THE TRIGAN EMPIRE

JANNO'S DESERT ORDEAL

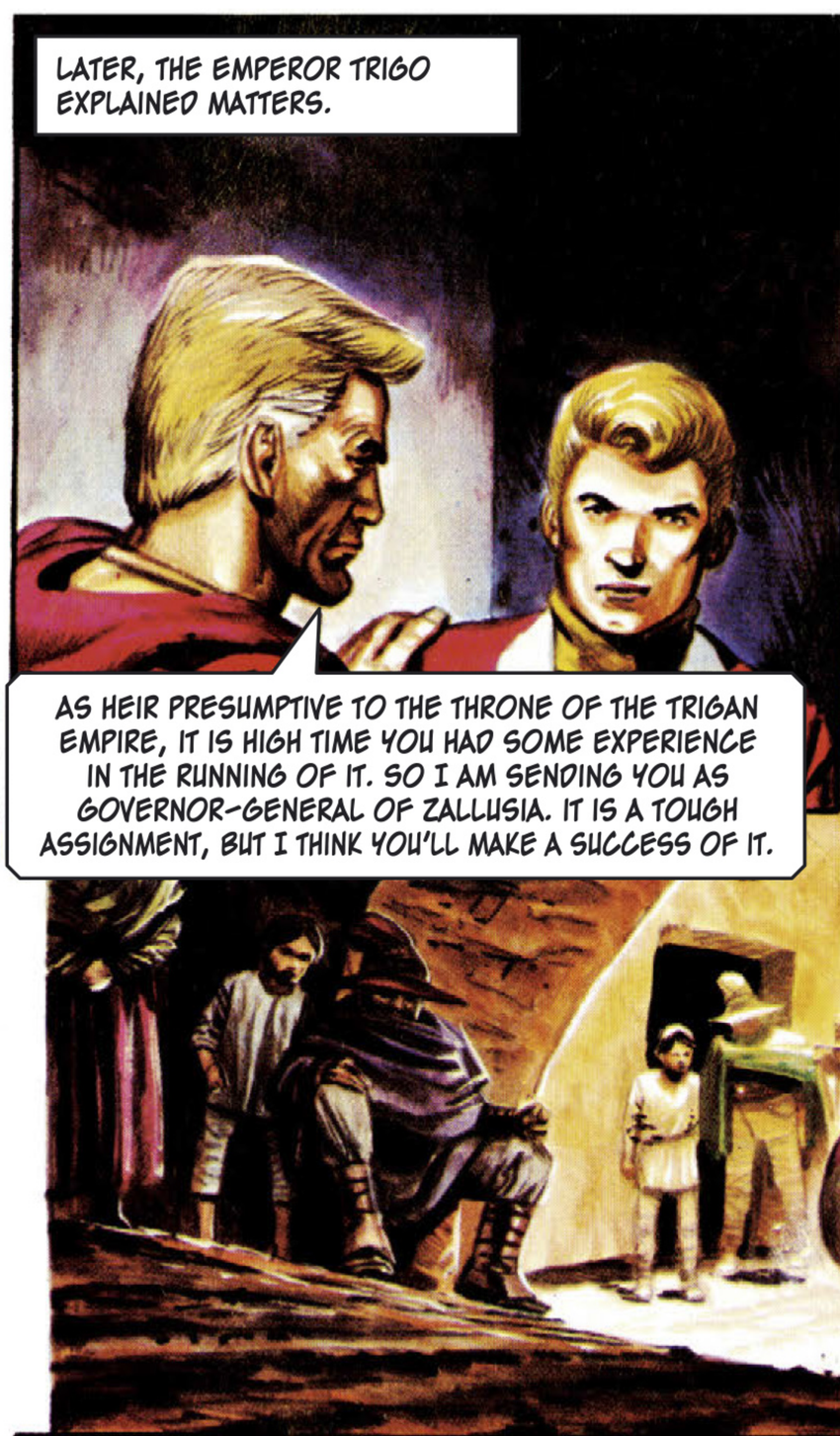
Originally published in ***Look and Learn*** 761 - 768

14th August 1976 – 25th September 1976

Story by Mike Butterworth

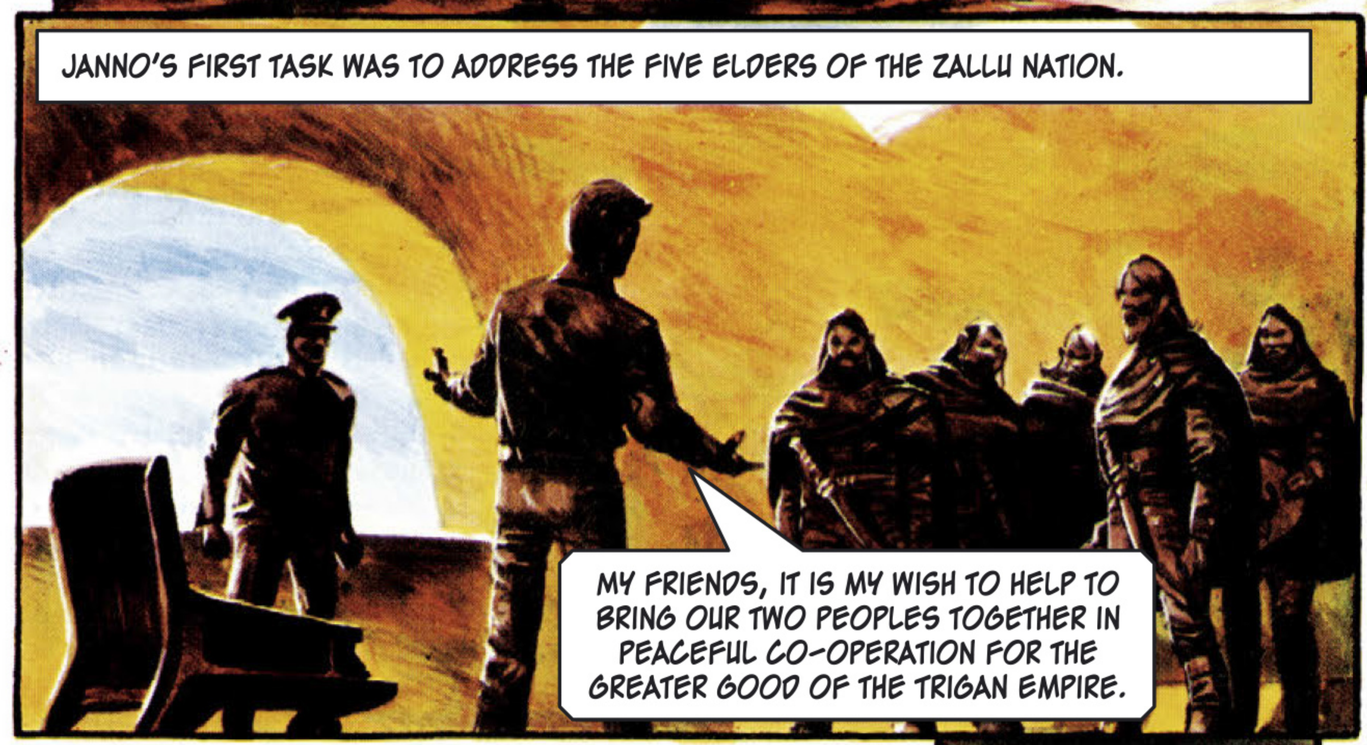
Art by Oliver Frey

THE ZALLUS WERE A RACE OF WARRIORS LIVING ON THE BORDERS OF VORG PROVINCE. ONE DAY, THEIR DREADED CAVALRY POURED OVER THE FRONTIER AND ATTACKED!
DEATH TO ALL TRIGANS!
ALTHOUGH THE TRIGAN FORCES WERE TAKEN BY SURPRISE, THE ZALLUS REALLY HAD NO HOPE. IN THE LONG RUN, AGAINST THE MIGHT OF THE TRIGAN EMPIRE, THEY WERE SURROUNDED AND CUT TO PIECES.
THE LAST ZALLUS WARRIOR HURLED HIMSELF INTO THE ABYSS, WITH DEFIANCE STILL ON HIS LIPS.
DEATH TO ALL TRIGANS!
OLIVER FREY
SO IT WAS THAT, FOR THE SAKE OF FUTURE PEACE, THE TRIGANS WERE OBLIGED TO OCCUPY THE COUNTRY OF ZALLUS.
I HAVE A FEELING THAT WE ARE NOT WANTED HERE.
YOU KNOW THE OLD SAYING. 'MAKE AN ENEMY OF A ZALLU AND HE STAYS YOUR ENEMY'.
BACK IN TRIGAN CITY, JANNO, THE EMPEROR'S NEPHEW, WAS TAKING UP HIS SLEEK FIGHTING CRAFT FOR WHAT SEEMED TO BE HIS LAST FLIGHT FOR A LONG TIME.
WHO WANTS TO GO TO ZALLUSIA OF ALL PLACES?


LATER, THE EMPEROR TRIGO EXPLAINED MATTERS.
AS HEIR PRESUMPTIVE TO THE THRONE OF THE TRIGAN EMPIRE, IT IS HIGH TIME YOU HAD SOME EXPERIENCE IN THE RUNNING OF IT. SO I AM SENDING YOU AS GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF ZALLUSIA. IT IS A TOUGH ASSIGNMENT, BUT I THINK YOU'LL MAKE A SUCCESS OF IT.

AND SO, A LUNAR MONTH LATER, JANNO DEPARTED.
GOOD LUCK!

LANDING IN ZALUSSIA, THE NEW GOVERNOR-GENERAL BECAME IMMEDIATELY AWARE OF THE HATRED DIRECTED AT HIM.
THEY LOOK A SULLEN LOT, COLONEL.
I'VE BEEN HERE A LONG TIME, EXCELLENCY, AND NOT ONCE HAVE I SEEN A ZALLU SMILE.


JANNO'S FIRST TASK WAS TO ADDRESS THE FIVE ELDERS OF THE ZALLU NATION.
MY FRIENDS, IT IS MY WISH TO HELP TO BRING OUR TWO PEOPLES TOGETHER IN PEACEFUL CO-OPERATION FOR THE GREATER GOOD OF THE TRIGAN EMPIRE.

THE SENIOR ELDER REPLIED.
WHY SHOULD WE LISTEN TO YOUR WORDS, TRIGAN? YOU SPEAK AS A LEADER, BUT YOU SHOULD KNOW THAT NO-ONE IS ACCEPTED AS A LEADER AMONG THE ZALLUS TILL HE HAS PERFORMED FIVE TESTS OF COURAGE TO PROVE HIS WORTH.

JANNO REPLIED WITHOUT HESITATION.
VERY WELL! I, MYSELF WILL PERFORM ANY FIVE TASKS YOU CHOOSE TO SET ME.

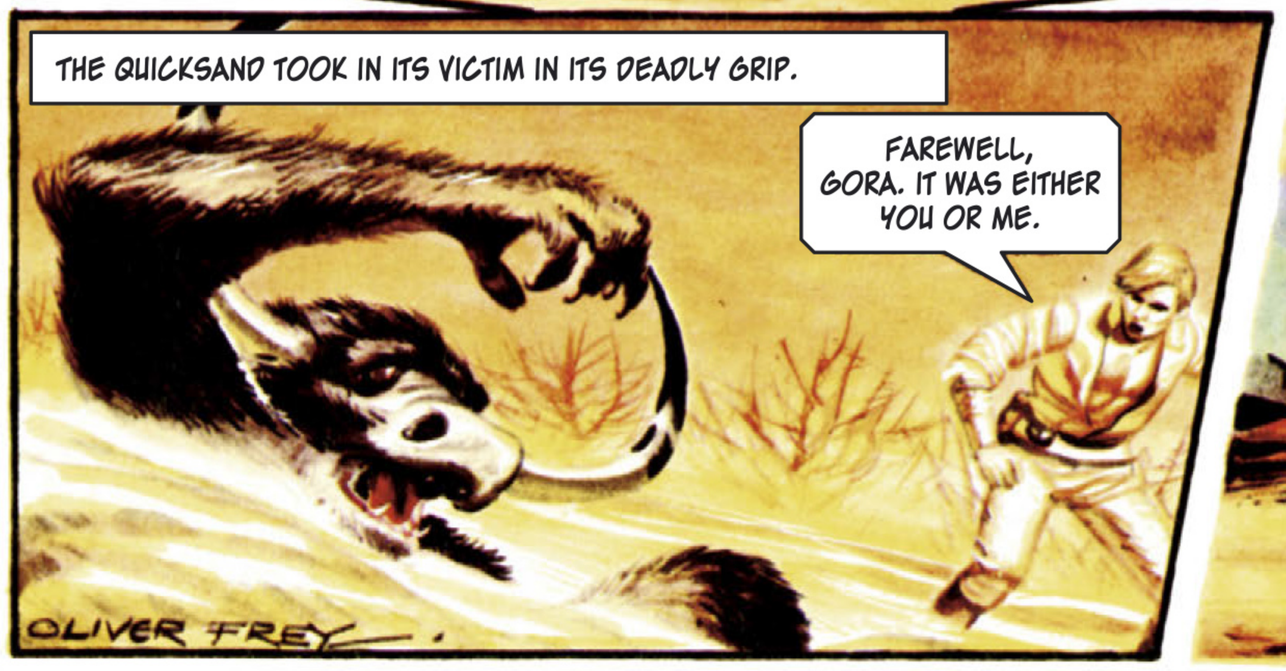
THE YOUNG FOOL FELL NEATLY INTO OUR TRAP.
HE IS AS GOOD AS DEAD! THE TASKS WE SHALL SET HIM WOULD BREAK THE COURAGE OF A WILD ZARGOT!

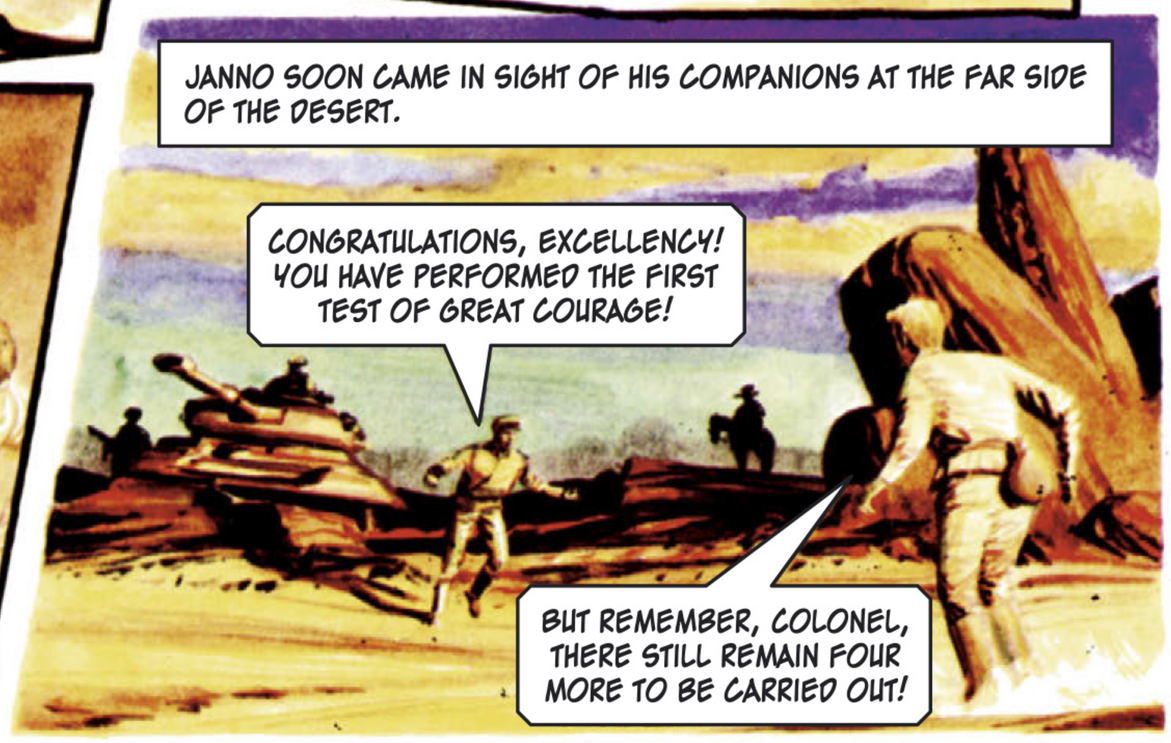
THE ZALLU ELDERS CONFERRED AMONG THEMSELVES FOR SOME TIME, AND THEN THEIR SPOKESMAN POINTED TO JANNO.
WE HAVE DECIDED WHAT SHALL BE YOUR FIRST TASK.
YOU WILL CROSS THE DESERT OF ZATH, ALONE, UNARMED, AND ON FOOT.
JANNO'S AIDE HISSED, DESPERATELY, IN HIS CHIEF'S EAR.
THIS IS MADNESS, YOUR EXCELLENCY. THESE ANIMALS ARE OUT TO KILL YOU – AND THEY'LL SUCCEED. THE DESERT OF ZATH IS CRAWLING WITH SAVAGE PREDATORS, AND IT IS ALSO HALF-QUICKSAND!
SILENCE, COLONEL!
I ACCEPT!
BY TOMORROW'S SUNS, WE SHALL BE WITHOUT OUR HEADSTRONG YOUNG MASTER.
NO ONE HAS ATTEMPTED TO CROSS THE DESERT OF ZATH AND LIVED TO TELL THE TALE.
THE FOLLOWING DAWN, JANNO WAS TAKEN TO THE EDGE OF THE FORBIDDING TRACT OF DESERT.
I WILL SEE YOU AT THE FAR SIDE OF THE DESERT AT SUNDOWN, COLONEL.
I HOPE SO, EXCELLENCY.

HE SET OFF IN THE SEARING HEAT OF ELEKTON'S TWIN SUNS AS THEY ROSE ON HIGH.
SO FAR, SO GOOD...
AND THEN...
QUICKSAND!
IF I CAN REACH THAT CLUMP OF SCRUB...
OLIVER FREY
WITH THE AID OF THE SCRUB, HE PULLED HIMSELF, SLOWLY, PAINFULLY, FROM THE CLOYING GRIP OF THE QUICKSAND.
I CAN NEVER HOPE TO BE SO LUCKY AGAIN!
IT WAS THEN THAT HE SAW...IT!
A HORNED GORA. TERROR OF THE DESERT OF ZATH.
THE BRUTE WALKS QUICKLY AND SURE-FOOTED THROUGH THE DESERT. EITHER IT KNOWS – OR SENSES – THE SAFE PATHS THROUGH THE QUICKSAND. WHAT IF I WERE TO – FOLLOW IT?
IF IT TURNS ITS HEAD, I'M DONE FOR!

JUST WHEN IT SEEMED THAT THEY MUST BE CLEAR OF THE QUICKSAND, JANNO'S FOOT SENT A STONE BOUNDING ALONG THE PATH.
GNAAAAGH!
NOW FOR TROUBLE – BIG TROUBLE!

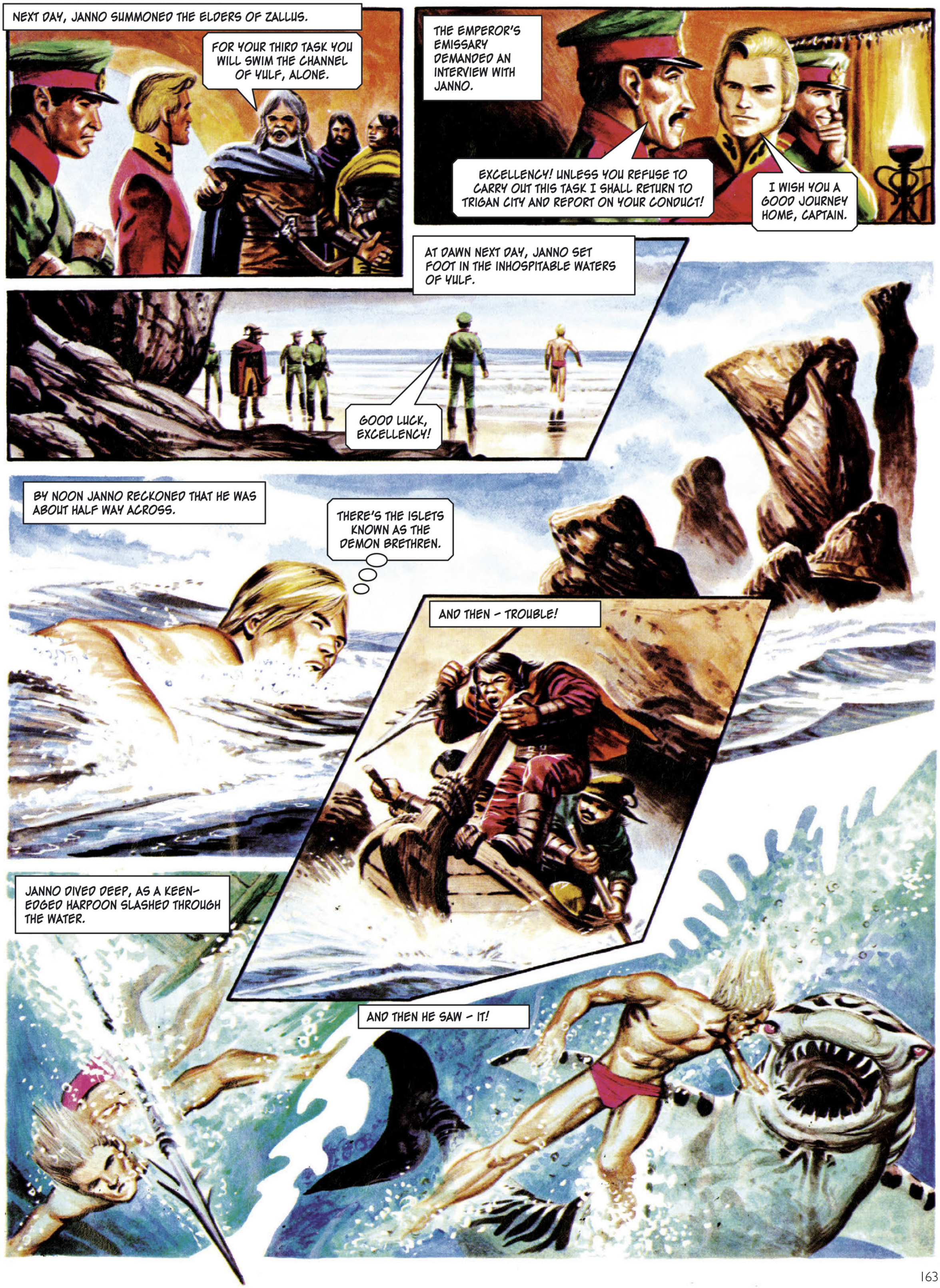
HE CROUCHED TO MEET THE COMING ONSLAUGHT.
IF I STEP TO ONE SIDE, I COULD WALK STRAIGHT INTO QUICKSAND!
AN INSTANT BEFORE WHAT SEEMED LIKE CERTAIN DESTRUCTION...
USING THE GORA'S OWN IMPETUS, HE SENT THE GREAT BEAST OVER HIS SHOULDERS!

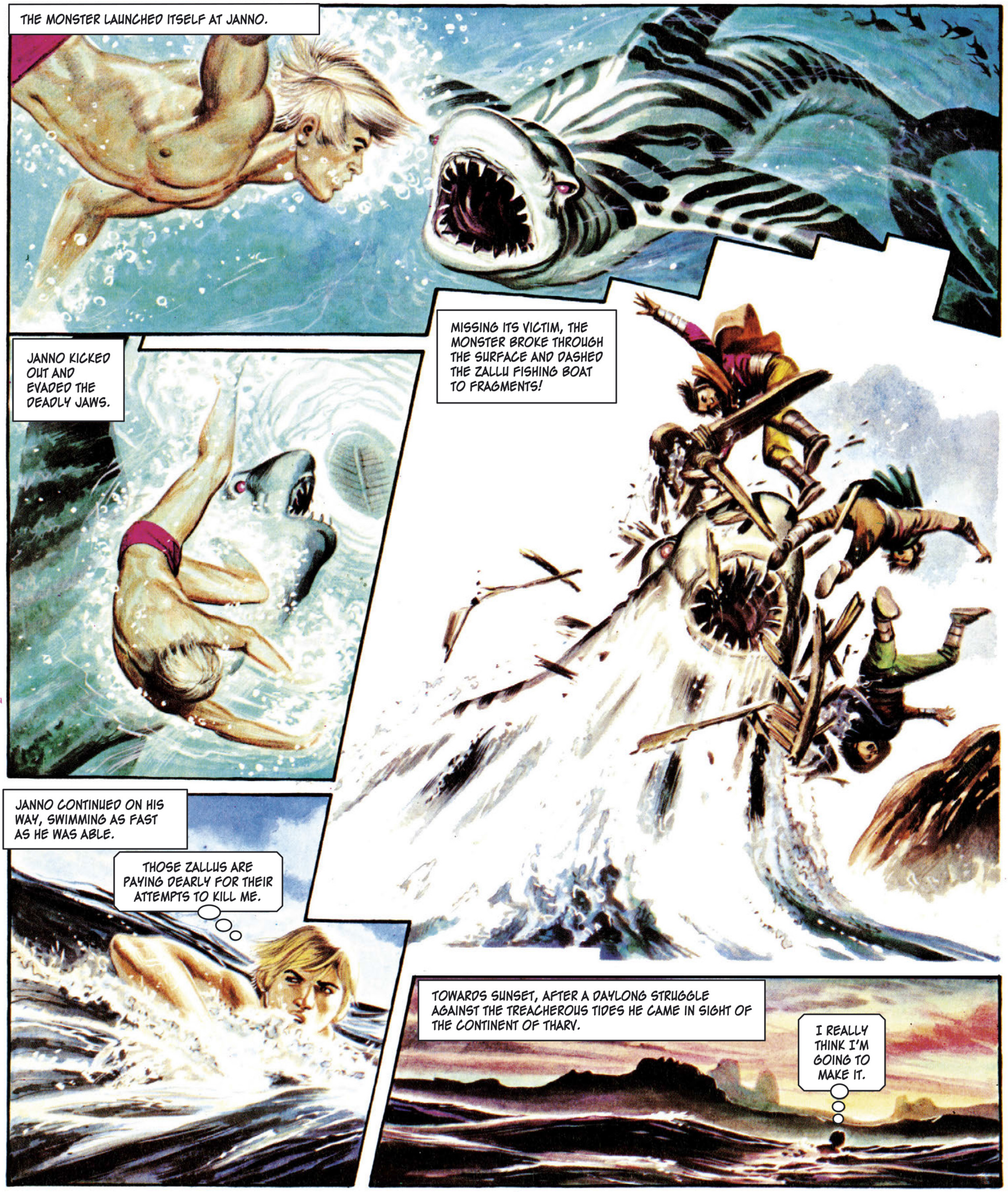

THE QUICKSAND TOOK IN ITS VICTIM IN ITS DEADLY GRIP.
FAREWELL, GORA. IT WAS EITHER YOU OR ME.
OLIVER FREY


JANNO SOON CAME IN SIGHT OF HIS COMPANIONS AT THE FAR SIDE OF THE DESERT.
CONGRATULATIONS, EXCELLENCY! YOU HAVE PERFORMED THE FIRST TEST OF GREAT COURAGE!
BUT REMEMBER, COLONEL, THERE STILL REMAIN FOUR MORE TO BE CARRIED OUT!

NEWS OF JANNO'S EXPLOIT REACHED THE EMPEROR TRIGO WHO WAS FURIOUS!
I SEND HIM TO CONTROL THE ZALLUS, AND HE SPENDS HIS TIME TRYING TO GET HIMSELF KILLED.
GO TO MY NEPHEW! TELL HIM THAT I DO NOT EXPECT THE HEIR PRESUMPTIVE TO THE THRONE OF THE TRIGAN EMPIRE TO RISK HIS NECK FOR THE AMUSEMENT OF A PACK OF ZALLU BARBARIANS!
YES, IMPERIAL MAJESTY!
BRAG HAD A WRY COMMENT TO MAKE TO HIS BROTHER...
AT HIS AGE, YOU WOULD HAVE DONE EXACTLY THE SAME! COME NOW, TRIGO – ADMIT IT!
I ADMIT NOTHING!
THE EMPEROR'S EMISSARY ARRIVED IN ZALLUSIA THE FOLLOWING DAY AND PRESENTED HIMSELF AT JANNO'S HEADQUARTERS.
I'M AFRAID YOU ARE A LITTLE TOO LATE, MY DEAR FELLOW.
I COME BY ORDER OF THE EMPEROR TO INSTRUCT JANNO THAT HE MUST NOT CARRY OUT ANY MORE OF THESE FOOLHARDY TASKS.
YOU HAVE AN EXCELLENT VIEW FROM THIS WINDOW OF JANNO PERFORMING HIS SECOND TASK – SEE!
BY ALL THE STARS!
THE HIGHEST BUILDING IN THE CITY WAS A GIANT MEMORIAL TO A LONG DEAD ZALLU CHIEF. JANNO WAS CLIMBING IT!
HE–HE'LL NEVER MAKE IT.
POSSIBLY, BUT HE'LL PERISH TRYING.
AT THE FAR SIDE OF THE SQUARE, A HIDDEN MARKSMAN TOOK AIM.
DIE, TRIGAN.

THUNKKK! A BULLET STRUCK THE MASONRY CLOSE BY JANNO'S HAND.
JANNO RECOVERED, AND MOVED SWIFTLY TO ONE SIDE, NEXT TIME THE HIDDEN MARKSMAN FIRED JANNO WAS BEHIND COVER.
HE WON'T GET ME NOW!
OTHERS HAD SEEN THE INCIDENT...
GO AND GET THAT SNIPER.
SURE ENOUGH, JANNO CLIMBED SAFELY ON TO THE HIGH PLATFORM.
JANNO'S ALL RIGHT. HE'LL REACH THE TOP.
AFTER DESCENDING SAFELY, HE WAS ADDRESSED BY HIS GRIM FACED AIDE.
WE HAVE NO PROOF. I MEAN TO SHOW THE ELDERS THAT A TRIGAN IS NOT ONLY BRAVE, BUT JUST.
THE SNIPER ESCAPED. IT'S CLEAR THAT HE WAS ACTING ON ORDERS FROM THE ELDERS. LET ME EXECUTE A COUPE OF THOSE SCOUNDRELS. YOU WON'T HAVE ANY MORE TROUBLE THEN!
NO, COLONEL!
OLIVER FREY


NEXT DAY, JANNO SUMMONED THE ELDERS OF ZALLUS.
FOR YOUR THIRD TASK YOU WILL SWIM THE CHANNEL OF YULF, ALONE.
THE EMPEROR'S EMISSARY DEMANDED AN INTERVIEW WITH JANNO.
EXCELLENCY! UNLESS YOU REFUSE TO CARRY OUT THIS TASK I SHALL RETURN TO TRIGAN CITY AND REPORT ON YOUR CONDUCT!
I WISH YOU A GOOD JOURNEY HOME, CAPTAIN.
AT DAWN NEXT DAY, JANNO SET FOOT IN THE INHOSPITABLE WATERS OF YULF.
GOOD LUCK, EXCELLENCY!
BY NOON JANNO RECKONED THAT HE WAS ABOUT HALF WAY ACROSS.
THERE'S THE ISLETS KNOWN AS THE DEMON BRETHREN.
AND THEN – TROUBLE!
JANNO DIVED DEEP, AS A KEEN-EDGED HARPOON SLASHED THROUGH THE WATER.
AND THEN HE SAW – IT!


THE MONSTER LAUNCHED ITSELF AT JANNO.
JANNO KICKED OUT AND EVADED THE DEADLY JAWS.
MISSING ITS VICTIM, THE MONSTER BROKE THROUGH THE SURFACE AND DASHED THE ZALLU FISHING BOAT TO FRAGMENTS!
JANNO CONTINUED ON HIS WAY, SWIMMING AS FAST AS HE WAS ABLE.
THOSE ZALLUS ARE PAYING DEARLY FOR THEIR ATTEMPTS TO KILL ME.
TOWARDS SUNSET, AFTER A DAYLONG STRUGGLE AGAINST THE TREACHEROUS TIDES HE CAME IN SIGHT OF THE CONTINENT OF THARV.
I REALLY THINK I'M GOING TO MAKE IT.

IT WAS NEARLY DARK WHEN HE WADED ASHORE, WHERE HE WAS GREETED BY HIS STAFF, WHO HAD FLOWN OVER TO MEET HIM.
I'M GLAD TO SEE YOU, COLONEL.
ANY PROBLEMS ON THE WAY, EXCELLENCY?
NEWS OF JANNO'S EXPLOITS WERE BROUGHT TO THE EMPEROR IN TRIGAN CITY.
HOW THAT YOUNG DEMON DEFIES ME. DID I NOT SEND ORDERS THAT HE WAS NOT TO FALL INTO THE TRAP THAT THE ZALLU ELDERS DUG FOR HIM?
I WAS AMBUSHED BY THE PEOPLE OF THE GROUP OF ISLETS CALLED "THE DEMON BRETHREN" BUT THEY BOUGHT MORE TROUBLE THAN THEY BARGAINED FOR.
HIS BROTHER INTERVENED – AND WAS ROUNDLY REBUKED FOR HIS PAINS.
TRIGO, YOU WOULD HAVE DONE JUST THE SAME IN THE LAD'S POSITION.
WILL YOU SHUT YOUR MOUTH!
SINCE MY FINE NEPHEW WILL NEITHER LISTEN TO REASON NOR RECOGNISE HIS DUTY, AND SINCE HE SCORNS MY MESSENGERS – I, MYSELF, WILL TRAVEL TO THE LAND OF ZALLUS AND SETTLE ACCOUNTS WITH HIM!
AT ABOUT THE SAME TIME, JANNO WAS RECEIVING HIS NEXT ORDER FROM THE ASSEMBLED ELDERS OF ZALLUS.
YOU HAVE DONE WELL SO FAR. WE ARE EMBOLDENED TO SUBJECT YOU, NEXT, TO AN ORDEAL FROM WHICH NO ONE HAS EVER RETURNED ALIVE AND SANE.
JANNO FELT A TREMOR PASS THROUGH HIS FRAME AS THE ELDERS SPOKE...
YOU WILL PASS ONE COMPLETE NIGHT IN THE ABODE OF THE DEAD!
THE ABODE OF THE DEAD WAS AN ISLAND OFFSHORE, WHERE THE SLAIN WARRIORS OF THE ZALLU RACE HAD BEEN LAID TO REST SINCE TIME IMMEMORIAL. A PLACE OF MYSTERY, IT WAS REPUTED TO BE HAUNTED. NO ONE EVER WENT THERE AFTER SUNSET, ITS VERY APPEARANCE CAUSED EVEN THE BRAVEST TO SHUDDER...
ONE EVE, JANNO WAS TAKEN THERE...
OLIVER FREY

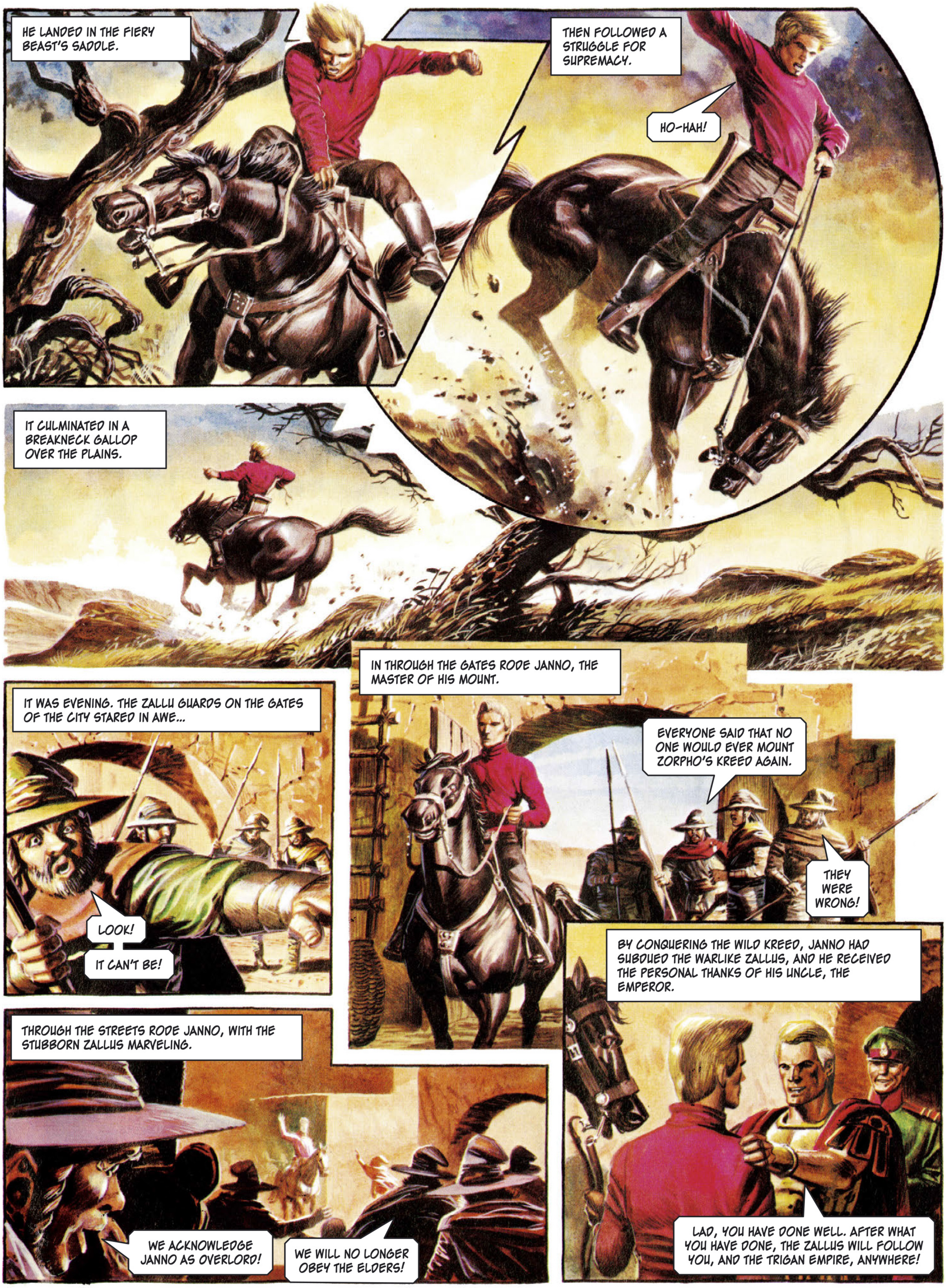
HAVING DEPOSITED HIS PASSENGER ON THE DREAD ISLAND, THE BOATMAN SCULLED HURRIEDLY AWAY.
YOU'LL NEVER SEE THE LIGHT OF TOMORROW'S DAWN, SO GOODBYE, TRIGAN!
JANNO GATHERED STICKS AND MADE A FIRE.
WHEN WILL THE TROUBLE START, I WONDER?
HE HAD NOT LONG TO WAIT!
BY ALL THE STARS!
OLIVER FREY
IS IT A - SPECTRE?
WE'LL SOON SEE.
NOW...

SPEED STRAIGHT AND TRUE TO YOUR MARK!
AAAAAAGHHH!
JANNO WAS BESIDE HIS VICTIM IN A FEW SWIFT BOUNDS, AND RIPPED OFF THE HIDEOUS MASK.
NO SPECTRE YOU, MY FRIEND, JUST ANOTHER ZALLU.
THE NEXT INSTANT, THE YOUNG TRIGAN'S WORLD DISSOLVED IN A FLASH OF AGONY.
UUUUUHH!
THE UNCONSCIOUS JANNO WAS SURROUNDED BY ZALLUS, INCLUDING ONE OF THEIR MERCILESS ELDERS.
HIS MIND IS TOO STRONG TO BE DESTROYED BY FEAR, SO WE MUST DESTROY HIS BODY! TAKE HIM TO THE PILLAR OF DOOM!
SURFACING FROM THE MISTS OF INSENSIBILITY, JANNO FOUND HIMSELF BOUND TO A STONE PILLAR BY THE WATER'S EDGE.
WE LEAVE YOU NOW TO YOUR FATE, TRIGAN.
THROUGH THE LONG NIGHT, JANNO WAITED, EVERY NERVE STRETCHED TO SNAPPING POINT, AND THEN TOWARDS DAWN – IT CAME!
NO! IT CAN'T BE... IT CAN'T!

FROM OUT OF THE DEPTHS ROSE A MONSTER OF THE SEAS.
BY THE STARS!
JANNO CLOSED HIS EYES AND WAITED FOR HIS END.
OLIVER TREY
AND THEN – A SHARP CRACK. THE SLAM OF A PROJECTILE.
THE SEA MONSTER SLID OUT OF SIGHT, AND JANNO WAS FREED BY THE EMPEROR OF THE TRIGANS.
I OWE YOU MY LIFE, UNCLE. BUT, I HAVE FAILED IN THIS TASK.
HOW SO? YOU HAVE PASSED ONE COMPLETE NIGHT HERE, FROM DUSK TILL DAWN!
AS THEY DREW AWAY FROM THE ISLAND, THEY COULD SEE THE ZALLUS GAZING AT THEM FROM THE HEIGHTS.
THEY MUST BE BESIDE THEMSELVES WITH FURY!
AND WITH GOOD CAUSE! YOU HAVE DESTROYED THE LEGEND OF THEIR PRECIOUS ISLAND AND REVEALED IT FOR THE SHAM IT IS!

I'M SORRY I DISOBEYED YOU, UNCLE. BUT I PROMISE YOU I WON'T ATTEMPT THE FINAL TASK!
YOU WILL PERFORM WHATEVER TASK THEY GIVE YOU, AND YOU WILL LIKE IT!
MY NEPHEW HAS PERFORMED HONOURABLY, DESPITE THE FACT THAT, AT YOUR INSTRUCTIONS, HE HAS BEEN TREACHEROUSLY ATTACKED ON EVERY POSSIBLE OCCASION.
ON THEIR ARRIVAL BACK AT THE CITY, THE EMPEROR SUMMONED THE ELDERS OF THE ZALLUS.
THE ELDERS MUTTERED AMONG THEMSELVES.
DOES TRIGO REALLY THINK WE CAN BE SHAMED BY HIS TALK OF TREACHERY?
WAIT TILL JANNO ATTEMPTS THE FINAL TASK!
WHAT IS TO BE JANNO'S FINAL TASK? SPEAK!
ZORPHO OF ZALLU HAD BEEN A LEGEND IN HIS LIFETIME, AS HAD THE GREAT BLACK WAR-KREED THAT ONLY HE COULD RIDE. WARLORD OF THE ZALLUS, HE HAD BEEN STRUCK DOWN IN BATTLE – FALLING FROM THE SADDLE.
HE IS TO TAME THE WILD KREED OF ZORPHO AND RIDE IT IN TRIUMPH INTO THE CITY. FOR SUCH A HEROIC FEAT, THE ZALLUS WILL ACKNOWLEDGE HIS OVERLORDSHIP.
STILL SADDLED AND CAPARISONED, THE GREAT KREED NOW RAN WILD ON THE PLAINS, TERRORIZING ALL WHO CAME WITHIN ITS REACH!
IT'S THE WILD KREED! FLY FOR YOUR LIVES!
TRIGO HEARD THE CHILLING DEMAND – AND ADDED HIS OWN COMMENT.
I HOPE FOR THEIR SAKES THAT YOU SUCCEED, JANNO. FOR IF YOU FAIL AND PERISH IN THE ATTEMPT, THE ELDERS OF ZALLU WILL ALL BE PUT TO THE SWORD.

GAZING SAVAGELY ABOUT THE PLAIN, THE GREAT BLACK WAR-KREED SAW...AN INTRUDER!
HO, THERE!
OLIVER FREY
RESPONDING ANGRILY, THE KREED LEAPT FORWARD.
UNLESS HE OVERTAKES ME AND RUNS ME DOWN, THE FIRST PART OF MY RUSE HAS WORKED.
JANNO LEAPT...
IF I MISS MY HANDHOLD, I'M DONE FOR!
SOME DISTANCE AWAY, A HIDDEN MARKSMAN SAW THAT JANNO HAD REACHED SAFETY.
PERISH, TRIGAN.
BUT...
NO, DON'T SHOOT!
WHY? I HAD ORDERS FROM THE ELDERS.
IF JANNO DIES, THE ACCURSED TRIGAN EMPEROR IS GOING TO EXECUTE THE ELDERS!
AT THAT MOMENT, JANNO LEAPT.
AND NOW – THE SECOND PART OF MY RUSE!


HE LANDED IN THE FIERY BEAST'S SADDLE.
THEN FOLLOWED A STRUGGLE FOR SUPREMACY.
HO-HAH!
IT CULMINATED IN A BREAKNECK GALLOP OVER THE PLAINS.
IT WAS EVENING. THE ZALLU GUARDS ON THE GATES OF THE CITY STARED IN AWE...
LOOK!
IT CAN'T BE!
IN THROUGH THE GATES RODE JANNO, THE MASTER OF HIS MOUNT.
EVERYONE SAID THAT NO ONE WOULD EVER MOUNT ZORPHO'S KREED AGAIN.
THEY WERE WRONG!
THROUGH THE STREETS RODE JANNO, WITH THE STUBBORN ZALLUS MARVELING.
WE ACKNOWLEDGE JANNO AS OVERLORD!
WE WILL NO LONGER OBEY THE ELDERS!
BY CONQUERING THE WILD KREED, JANNO HAD SUBDUED THE WARLIKE ZALLUS, AND HE RECEIVED THE PERSONAL THANKS OF HIS UNCLE, THE EMPEROR.
LAD, YOU HAVE DONE WELL. AFTER WHAT YOU HAVE DONE, THE ZALLUS WILL FOLLOW YOU, AND THE TRIGAN EMPIRE, ANYWHERE!

LXII

THE TRIGAN EMPIRE

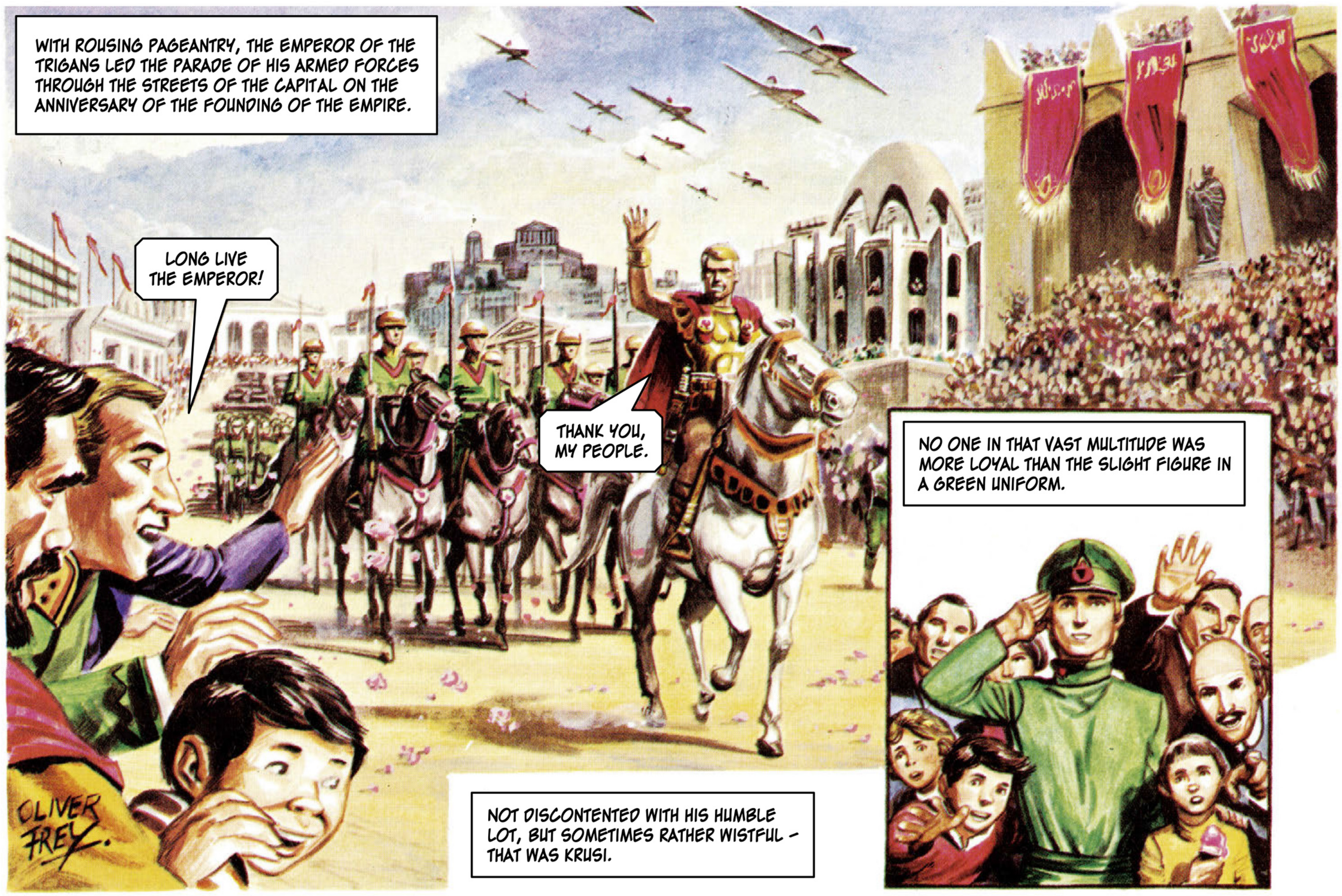
THE DECEPTION OF KRUSI

Originally published in ***Look and Learn*** 769 - 776

2nd October 1976 – 27th November 1976

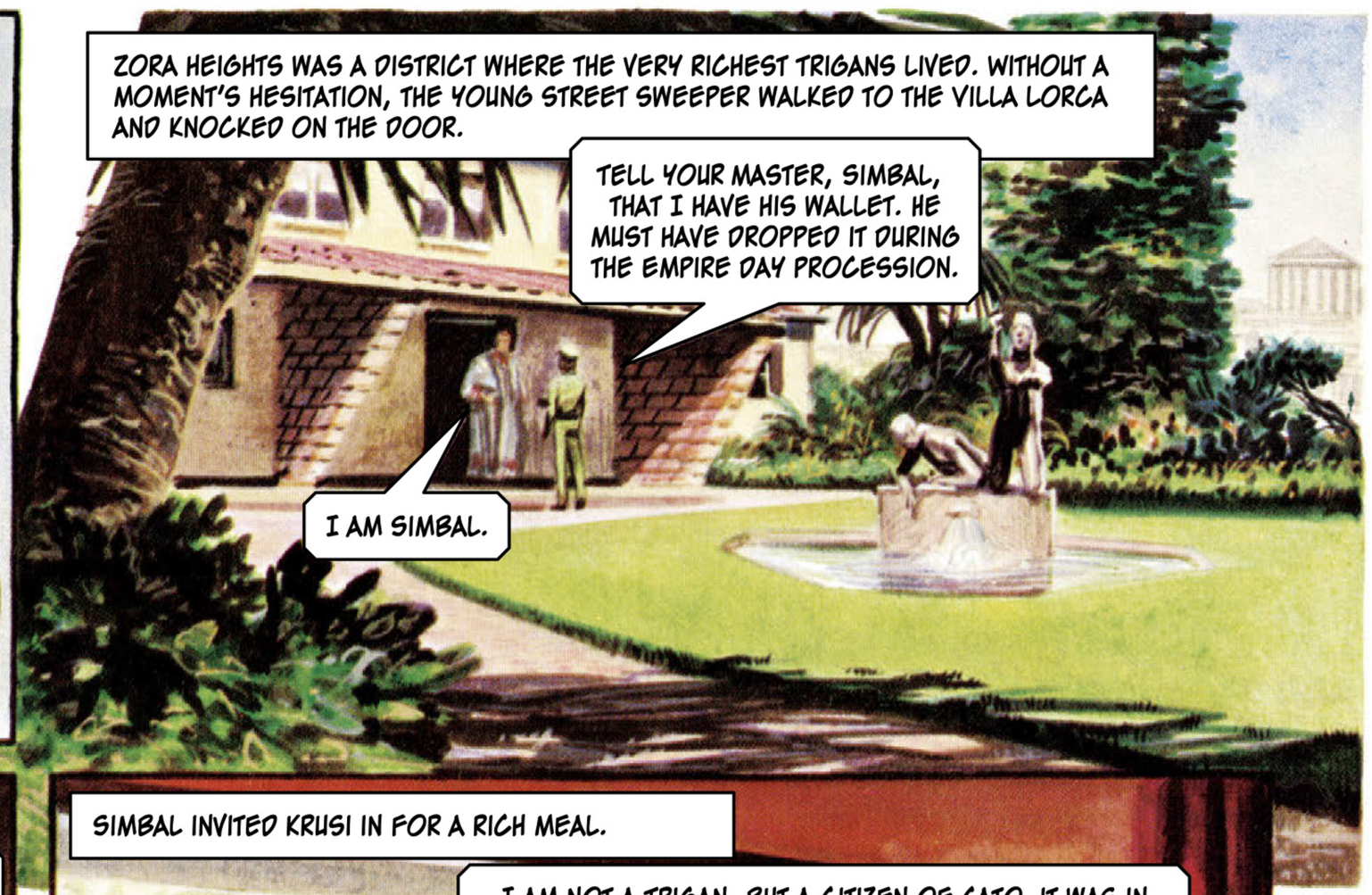
Story by Mike Butterworth

Art by Oliver Frey

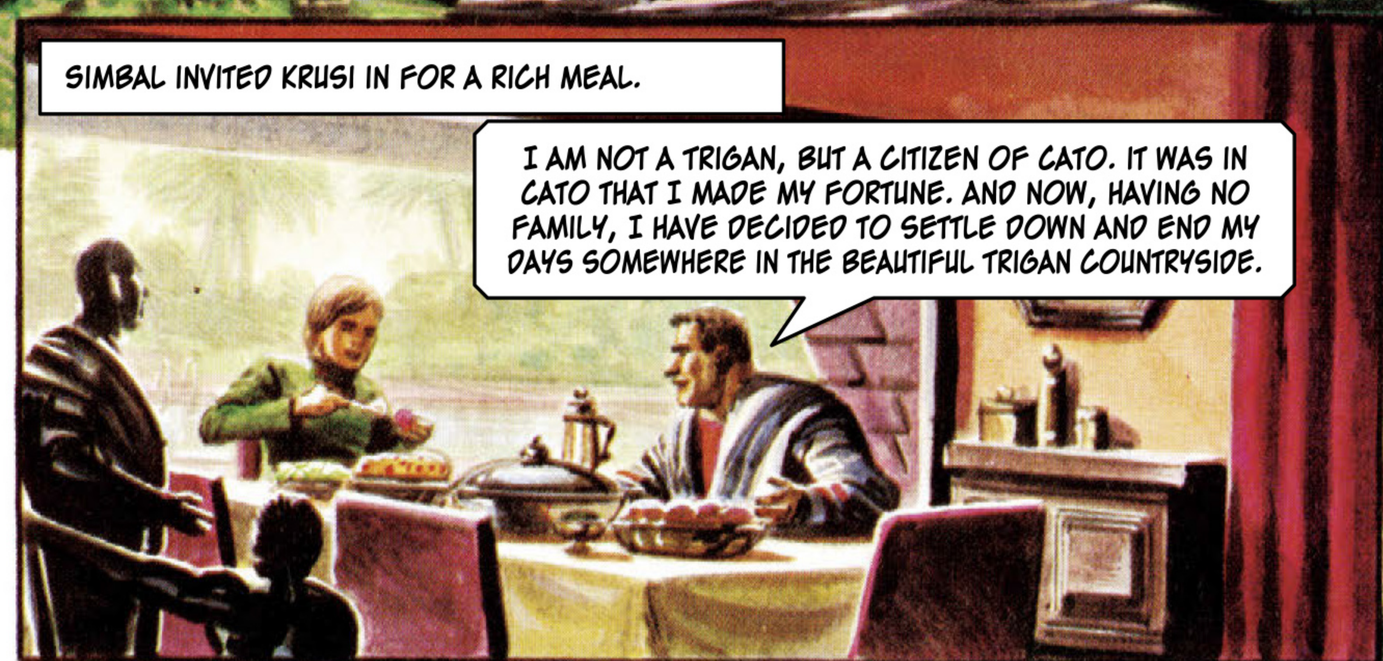

WITH ROUSING PAGEANTRY, THE EMPEROR OF THE TRIGANS LED THE PARADE OF HIS ARMED FORCES THROUGH THE STREETS OF THE CAPITAL ON THE ANNIVERSARY OF THE FOUNDING OF THE EMPIRE.
LONG LIVE THE EMPEROR!
THANK YOU, MY PEOPLE.
NO ONE IN THAT VAST MULTITUDE WAS MORE LOYAL THAN THE SLIGHT FIGURE IN A GREEN UNIFORM.
NOT DISCONTENTED WITH HIS HUMBLE LOT, BUT SOMETIMES RATHER WISTFUL – THAT WAS KRUSI.
OLIVER FREY.

THIS WAS KRUSI. NO SOLDIER, HE, BUT MERELY A STREET SWEEPER FOR THE TRIGAN CITY COUNCIL. THE PROCESSION PAST, KRUSI WENT BACK TO WORK.
IF ONLY I COULD HAVE BEEN SOMEBODY INSTEAD OF A NOBODY!
AND THEN...
A WALLET – AND WELL-FILLED, BY THE LOOK OF IT.

MORE MONEY THAN I'VE EVER SEEN IN ONE WAD BEFORE.
AND THERE'S A NAME AND ADDRESS ON THIS CARD... "SIMBAL - VILLA LORCA, ZORA HEIGHTS, NEAR TRIGAN CITY".


ZORA HEIGHTS WAS A DISTRICT WHERE THE VERY RICHEST TRIGANS LIVED. WITHOUT A MOMENT'S HESITATION, THE YOUNG STREET SWEEPER WALKED TO THE VILLA LORCA AND KNOCKED ON THE DOOR.
TELL YOUR MASTER, SIMBAL, THAT I HAVE HIS WALLET. HE MUST HAVE DROPPED IT DURING THE EMPIRE DAY PROCESSION.
I AM SIMBAL.

BUT IT'S ALL HERE! WHAT AN HONEST YOUNG FELLOW YOU ARE!
OF COURSE, SIR! I WORK FOR THE TRIGAN CITY COUNCIL. THEY DON'T EMPLOY DISHONEST FOLK.


SIMBAL INVITED KRUSI IN FOR A RICH MEAL.
I AM NOT A TRIGAN, BUT A CITIZEN OF CATO. IT WAS IN CATO THAT I MADE MY FORTUNE. AND NOW, HAVING NO FAMILY, I HAVE DECIDED TO SETTLE DOWN AND END MY DAYS SOMEWHERE IN THE BEAUTIFUL TRIGAN COUNTRYSIDE.

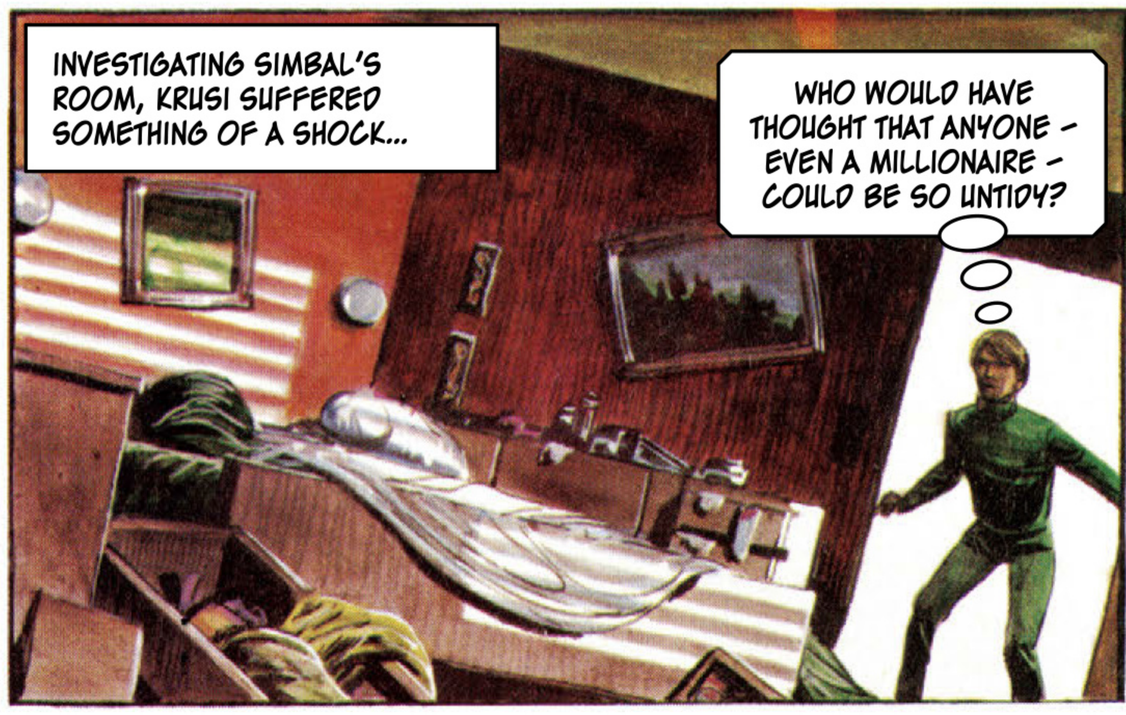
AFTER THE MEAL...
I LIKE YOU, KRUSI. YOU MUST STAY WITH ME FOR A FEW DAYS. WHY DON'T YOU HAVE A NAP TILL SUPPER TIME? UNLESS, LIKE ME YOU PREFER A DIP IN THE SWIMMING POOL.
I THINK I'D PREFER A LITTLE NAP.

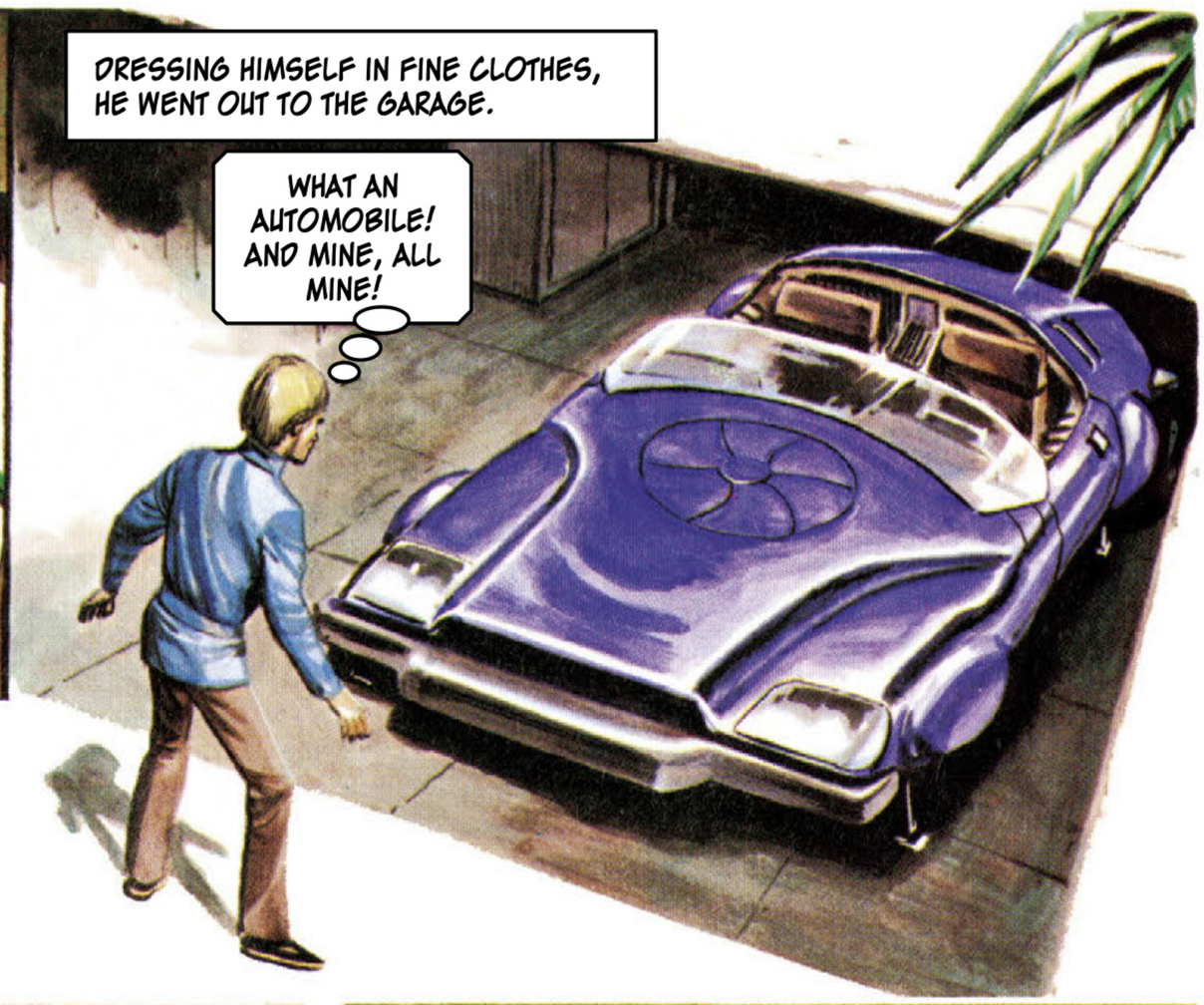
SIMBAL PLUNGED INTO THE LUXURY POOL.
THAT YOUNG FELLOW IS SO TRANSPARENTLY HONEST THAT I CAN'T AFFORD TO LET HIM GO. HE WILL BE OF TREMENDOUS HELP TO ME. I WILL EMPLOY HIM AS MY CONFIDENTIAL SECRETARY.

SOME TIME LATER - UNINVITED VISITORS.
HOW DID YOU...?
HOW DID WE TRACE YOU HERE? YOU DIDN'T REALLY THINK YOU WERE GOING TO GET AWAY WITH IT, DID YOU?

WE DON'T WANT TO HURT YOU, SIMBAL. TELL YOU WHAT, JUST DUCK YOUR HEAD UNDER WATER AND KEEP IT THERE WHILE I COUNT UP TO A THOUSAND, REAL SLOW...

LATER THAT AFTERNOON, REFRESHED BY HIS NAP, KRUSI WENT TO FIND HIS NEW FRIEND. HE DISCOVERED SIMBAL FLOATING IN THE POOL – FACE DOWNWARDS!
SIMBAL, ARE YOU ALL RIGHT? SIMBAL – SPEAK TO ME!
BUT SIMBAL HAD FINISHED FOREVER WITH SPEECH!
HE'S...HE'S...
OLIVER FREY
IT WAS THEN THAT TEMPTATION ENTERED THE LIFE OF THE FORMERLY HONEST STREET SWEEPER...
WHY NOT?...WHY NOT, INDEED?...
AND SO...
AFTER ALL, HE CAN'T SPEND HIS MONEY NOW!
THE LATE MILLIONAIRE WAS LAID TO REST BY THE LOVELY GARDENS OF THE VILLA.
PUT IT THIS WAY, SIMBAL – YOU TOLD ME YOU HAD NO FRIENDS OR RELATIONS. SO THERE'S NO HARM DONE TO ANYONE. THE MONEY WILL SIMPLY GO TO WASTE OTHERWISE...
WHY SHOULDN'T I – KRUSI THE POOR STREET SWEEPER – TAKE OVER THE IDENTITY OF SIMBAL THE MILLIONAIRE?


INVESTIGATING SIMBAL'S ROOM, KRUSI SUFFERED SOMETHING OF A SHOCK...
WHO WOULD HAVE THOUGHT THAT ANYONE - EVEN A MILLIONAIRE - COULD BE SO UNTIDY?

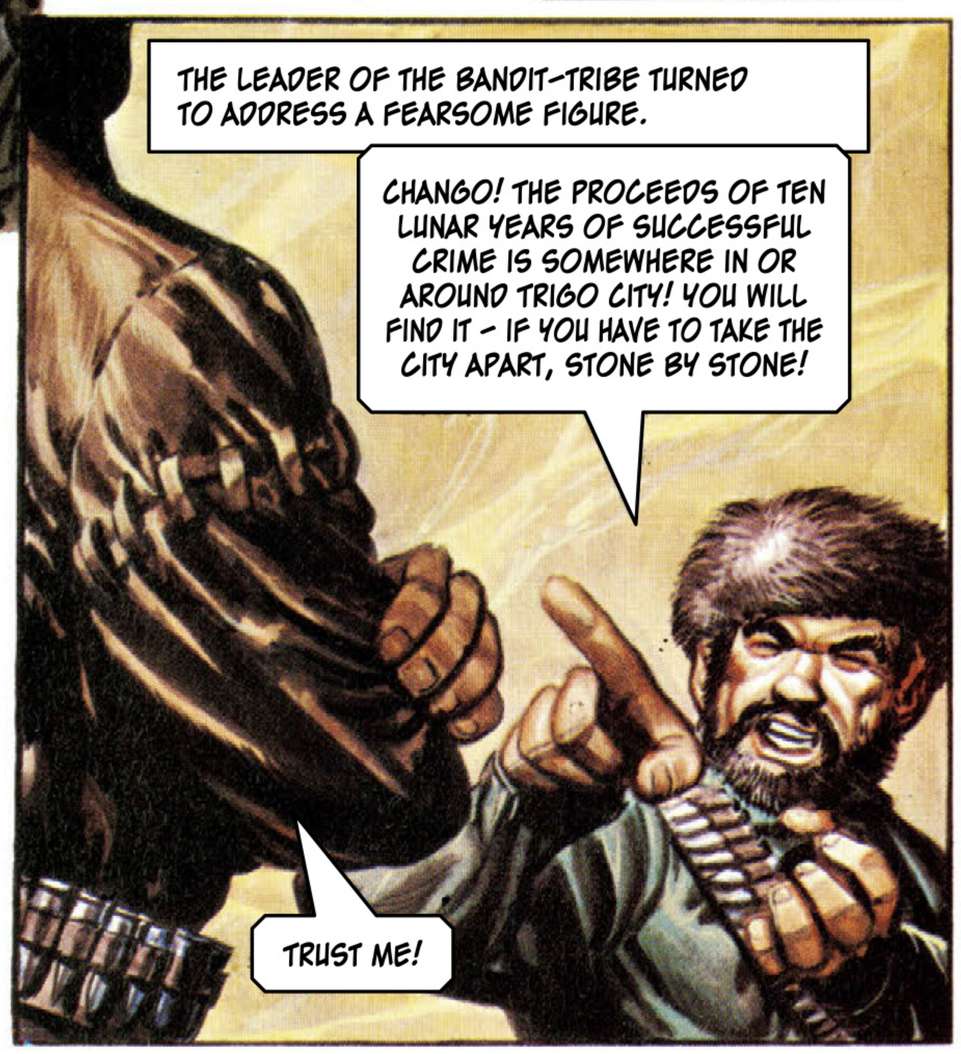

DRESSING HIMSELF IN FINE CLOTHES, HE WENT OUT TO THE GARAGE.
WHAT AN AUTOMOBILE! AND MINE, ALL MINE!

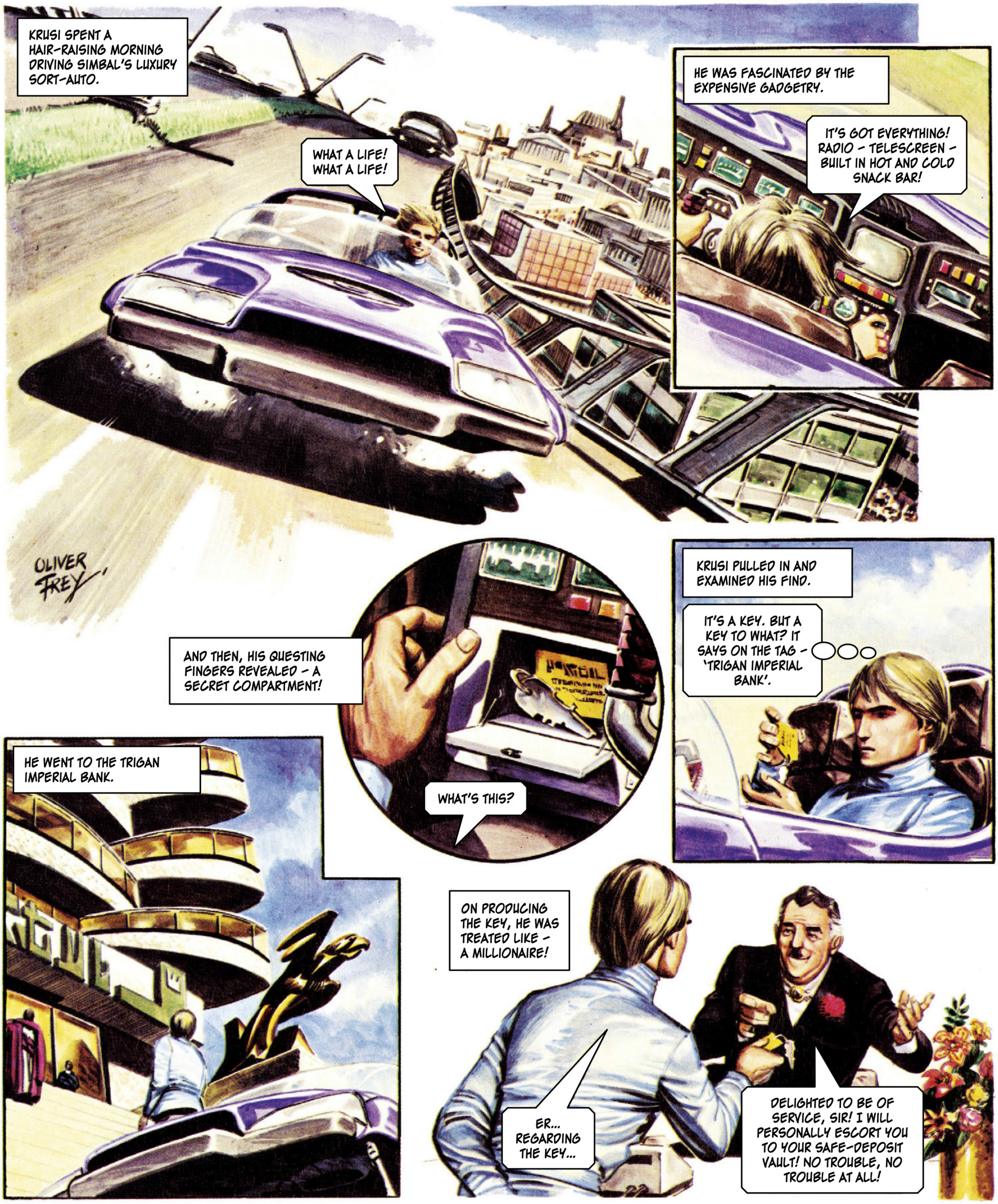
AT ABOUT THAT TIME ON A HILLCREST IN FAR OFF CATO, A HELI-JET WAS DESCENDING UPON A HIDDEN ENCAMPMENT.

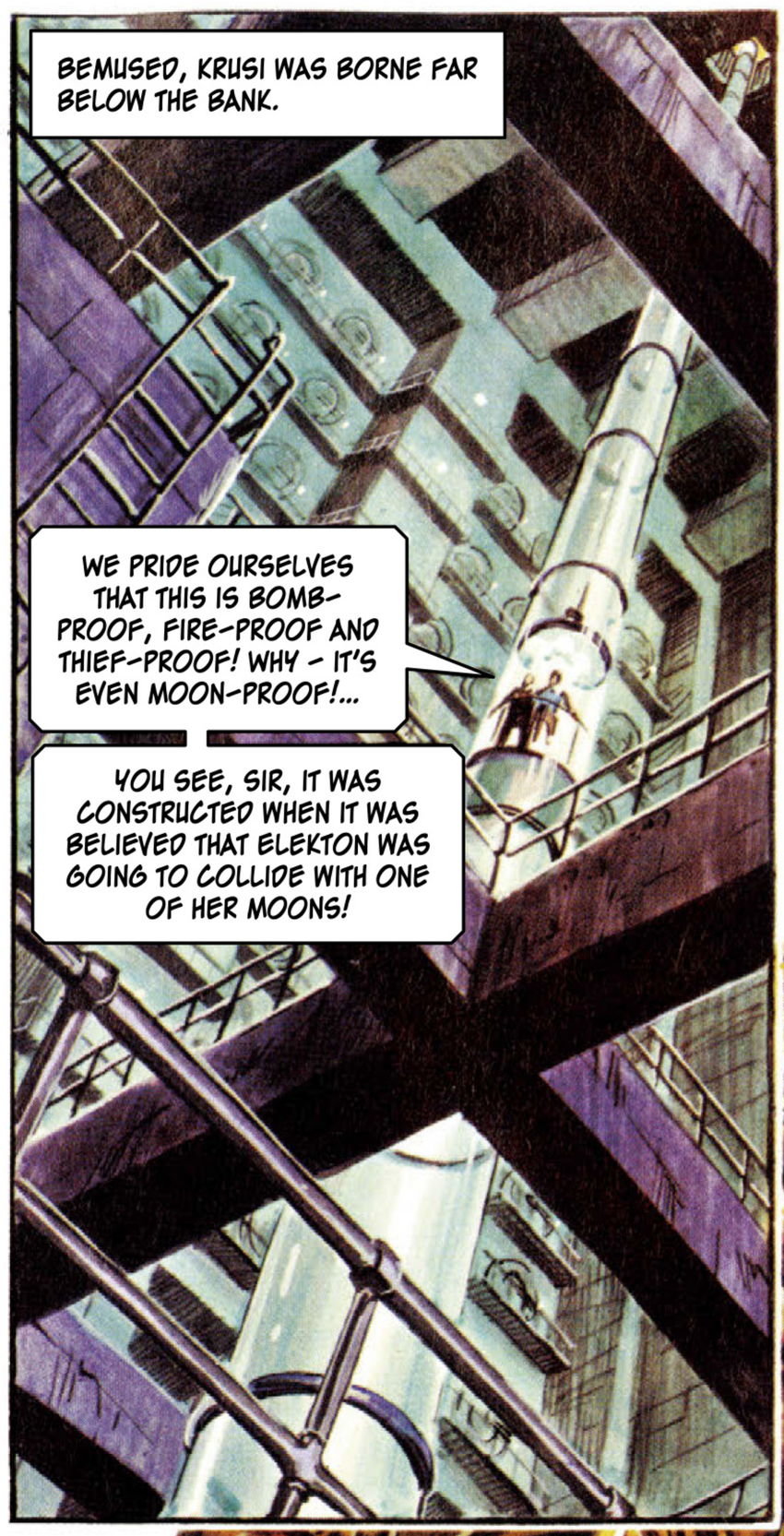
OUT STEPPED THE THREE THUGS WHO HAD CALLED UPON THE MILLIONAIRE SIMBAL - WITH SUCH DIRE RESULTS TO HIS WELL BEING.
WELL - WAS YOUR MISSION SUCCESSFUL? DID YOU ELIMINATE THAT TREACHEROUS ANIMAL AND DISCOVER THE WHEREABOUTS OF THE LOOT HE STOLE FROM US?

SIMBAL WE DISCREETLY DISPOSED OF. BUT, THOUGH WE SEARCHED HIS QUARTERS, WE WERE ABLE TO FIND NO CLUE AS TO WHERE HE HID THE LOOT.

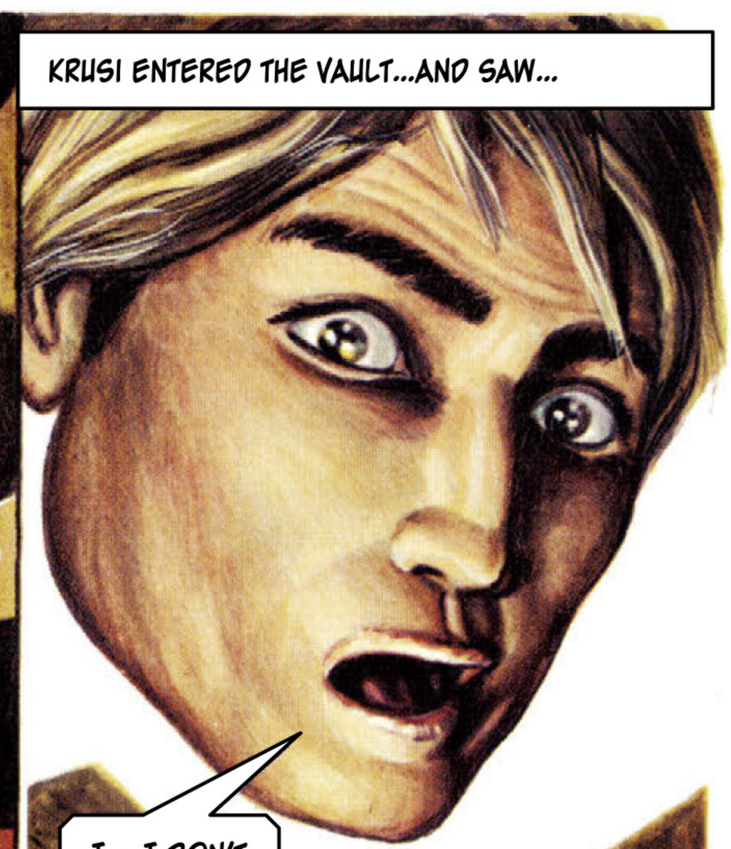
YOU ELIMINATED HIM WITHOUT GETTING THE INFORMATION? FOOLS! DOLTS! YOU SHOULD HAVE BROUGHT HIM BACK HERE! CHANGO WOULD HAVE MADE HIM TALK!

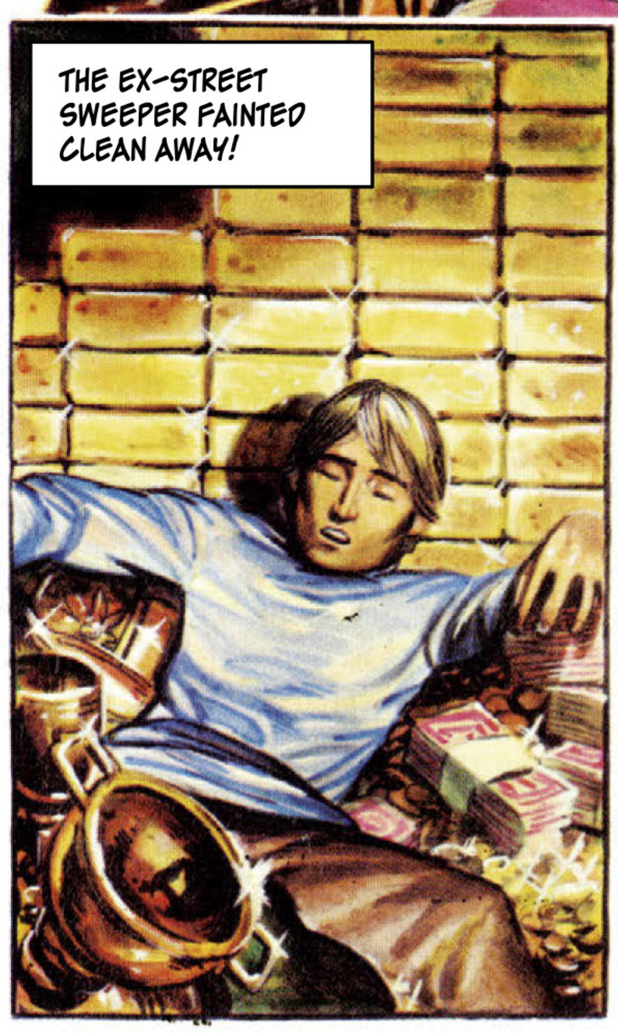

THE LEADER OF THE BANDIT-TRIBE TURNED TO ADDRESS A FEARSOME FIGURE.
CHANGO! THE PROCEEDS OF TEN LUNAR YEARS OF SUCCESSFUL CRIME IS SOMEWHERE IN OR AROUND TRIGO CITY! YOU WILL FIND IT - IF YOU HAVE TO TAKE THE CITY APART, STONE BY STONE!
TRUST ME!

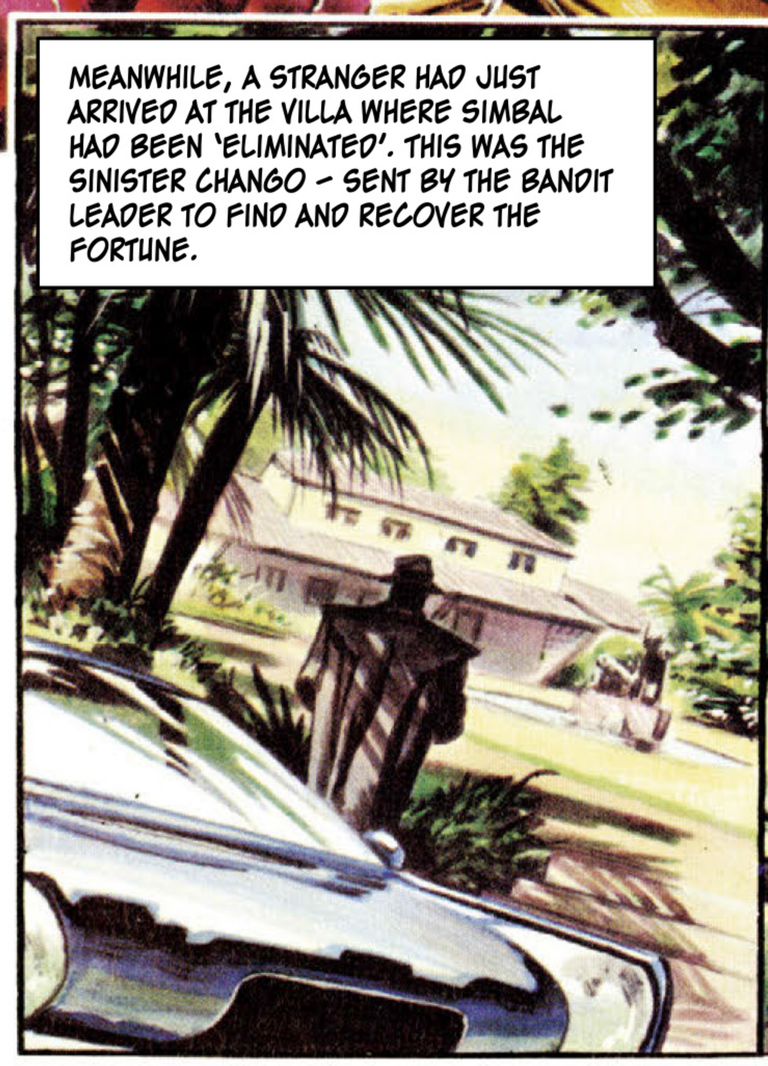

KRUSI SPENT A HAIR-RAISING MORNING DRIVING SIMBAL'S LUXURY SORT-AUTO.
WHAT A LIFE! WHAT A LIFE!
HE WAS FASCINATED BY THE EXPENSIVE GADGETRY.
IT'S GOT EVERYTHING! RADIO - TELESCREEN - BUILT IN HOT AND COLD SNACK BAR!
OLIVER FREY
AND THEN, HIS QUESTING FINGERS REVEALED - A SECRET COMPARTMENT!
WHAT'S THIS?
KRUSI PULLED IN AND EXAMINED HIS FIND.
IT'S A KEY. BUT A KEY TO WHAT? IT SAYS ON THE TAG - 'TRIGAN IMPERIAL BANK'.
HE WENT TO THE TRIGAN IMPERIAL BANK.
ON PRODUCING THE KEY, HE WAS TREATED LIKE - A MILLIONAIRE!
ER... REGARDING THE KEY...
DELIGHTED TO BE OF SERVICE, SIR! I WILL PERSONALLY ESCORT YOU TO YOUR SAFE-DEPOSIT VAULT! NO TROUBLE, NO TROUBLE AT ALL!

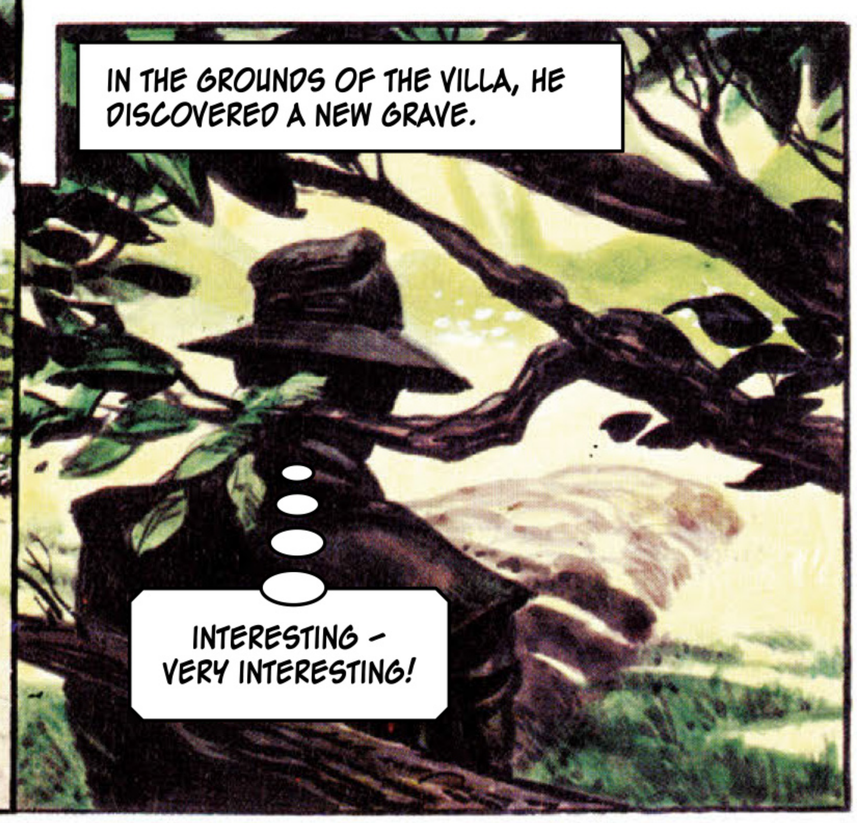

BEMUSED, KRUSI WAS BORNE FAR BELOW THE BANK.
WE PRIDE OURSELVES THAT THIS IS BOMB-PROOF, FIRE-PROOF AND THIEF-PROOF! WHY – IT'S EVEN MOON-PROOF!...
YOU SEE, SIR, IT WAS CONSTRUCTED WHEN IT WAS BELIEVED THAT ELEKTON WAS GOING TO COLLIDE WITH ONE OF HER MOONS!

THE KEY OPENED A GREAT DOOR.
I WILL LEAVE YOU, SIRE, TO EXAMINE YOUR – ER – BELONGINGS.

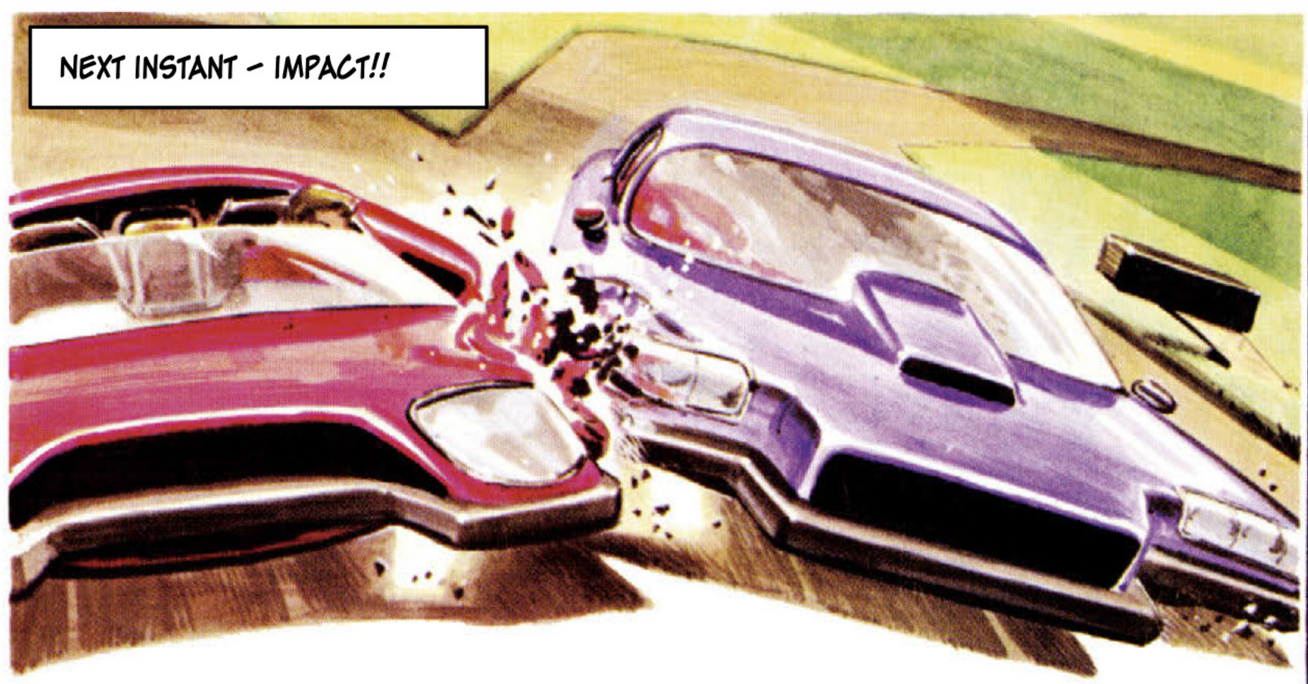

KRUSI ENTERED THE VAULT...AND SAW...
I – I DON'T BELIEVE IT!

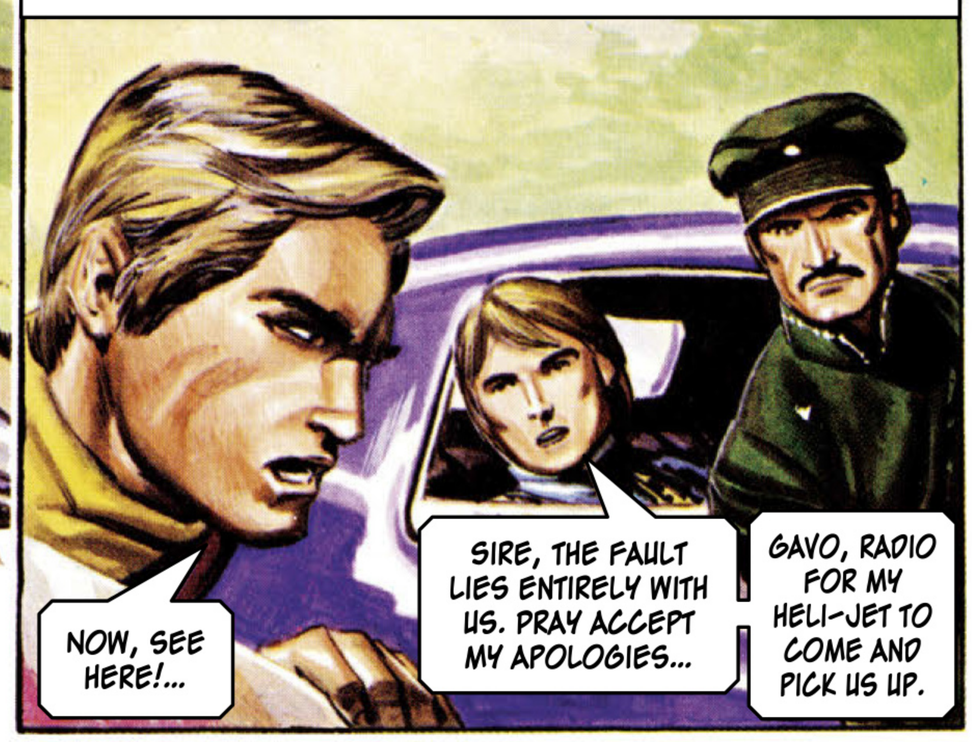

THE EX-STREET SWEEPER FAINTED CLEAN AWAY!


MEANWHILE, A STRANGER HAD JUST ARRIVED AT THE VILLA WHERE SIMBAL HAD BEEN 'ELIMINATED'. THIS WAS THE SINISTER CHANGO – SENT BY THE BANDIT LEADER TO FIND AND RECOVER THE FORTUNE.

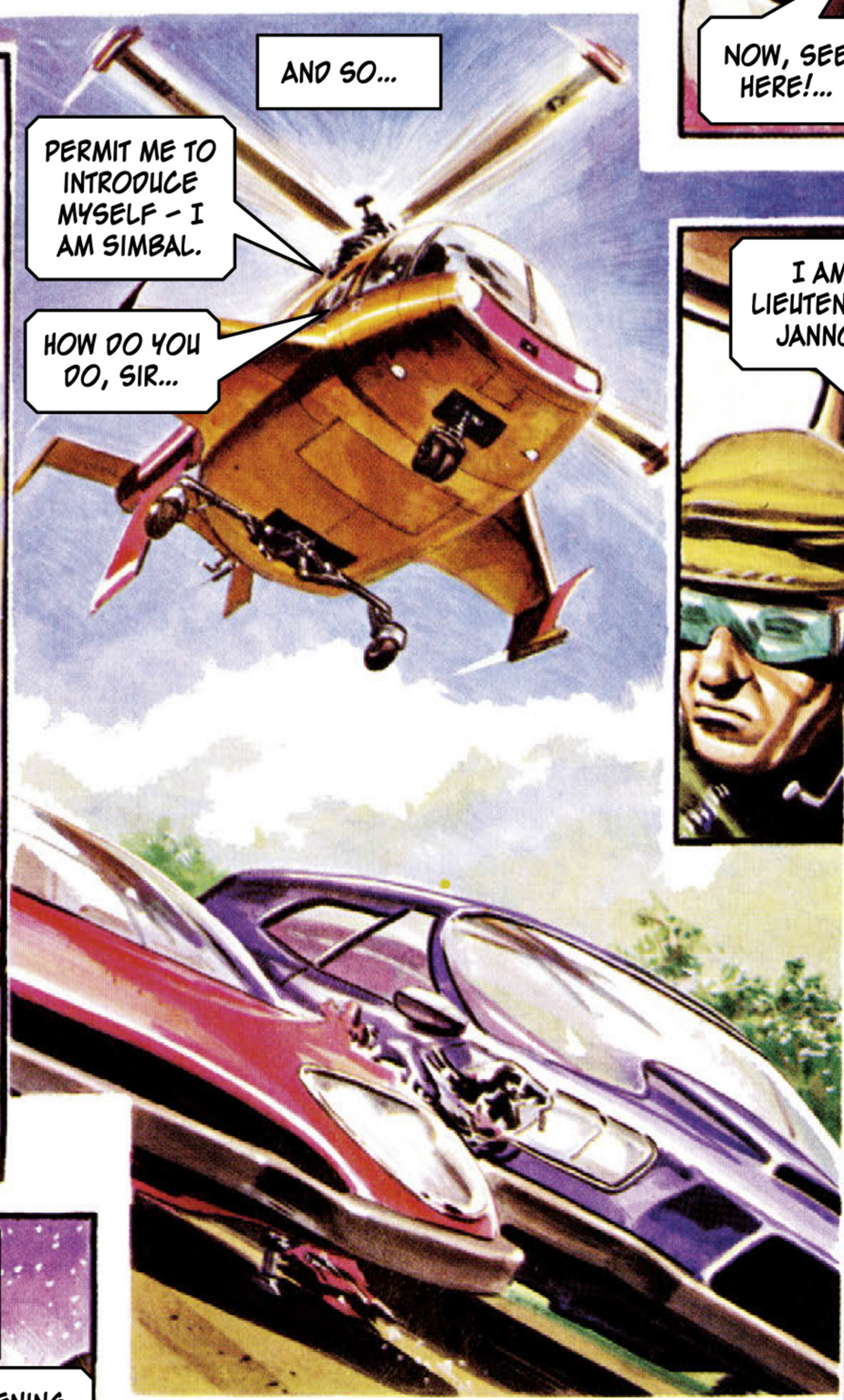

IN THE GROUNDS OF THE VILLA, HE DISCOVERED A NEW GRAVE.
INTERESTING – VERY INTERESTING!

KRUSI LEFT THE TRIGAN IMPERIAL BANK WITH A SONG IN HIS HEART – AND A POCKET FULL OF PRICELESS GEMS.
THANK YOU, FELLOW.
TO THE DOOR-KEEPER OF THE BANK HE GAVE A JEWEL FIT FOR AN EMPEROR'S CROWN.
BY ALL THE STARS! I NEED NEVER WORK AGAIN IN MY LIFE!
OLIVER FREY
THEN FOLLOWED A RIOT OF SPENDING...
I'LL HAVE IT!
I'LL HAVE TWO OF THOSE!
I'LL MOVE IN TOMORROW!
SOME DAYS LATER, JANNO WAS DRIVING OUT OF THE CITY ON HIS WAY TO THE AIR BASE. HE WAS LATE. AND HE WAS EXCEEDING THE SPEED LIMIT.
THAT IDIOT! – WHY DOESN'T HE LOOK WHERE HE'S GOING?


NEXT INSTANT – IMPACT!!


THE COLLISION WAS SPECTACULAR, BUT NOT DISASTROUS, JANNO LEAPT FROM THE AUTO, BLAZING WITH FURY – BUT...
NOW, SEE HERE!...
SIRE, THE FAULT LIES ENTIRELY WITH US. PRAY ACCEPT MY APOLOGIES...
GAVO, RADIO FOR MY HELI-JET TO COME AND PICK US UP.

IN NO TIME AT ALL A HELI-JET DESCENDED UPON THE AUTOWAY.
NOW, SIR, IF I CAN MAKE SOME AMENDS – WHERE CAN I DROP YOU?
THAT'S VERY KIND OF YOU, SIR. AT THE AIR BASE PLEASE.


AND SO...
PERMIT ME TO INTRODUCE MYSELF – I AM SIMBAL.
HOW DO YOU DO, SIR...

I AM LIEUTENANT JANNO.
NOT – THE JANNO, NEPHEW OF THE EMPEROR?
THAT'S RIGHT.

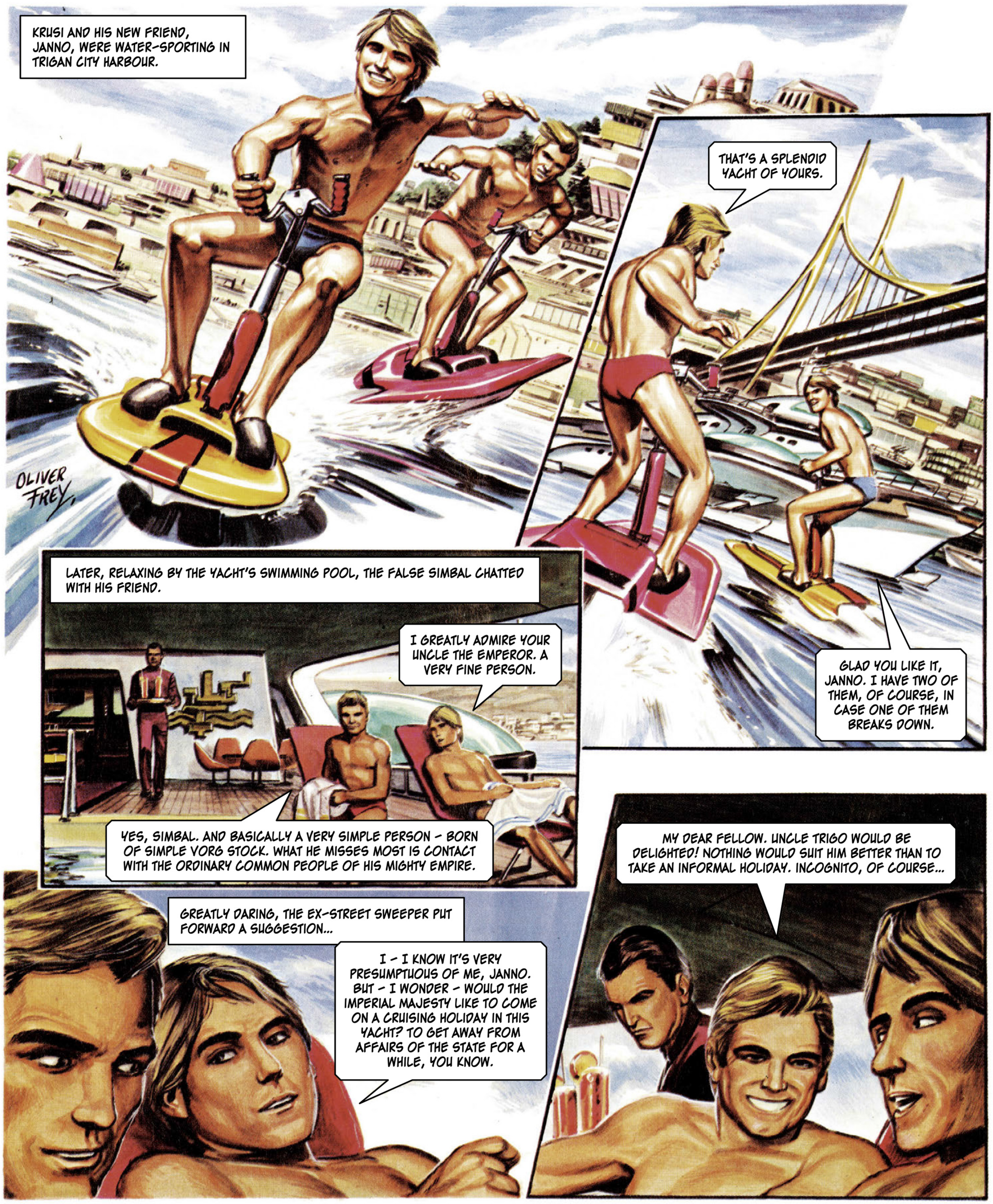
THE FORMER TRIGAN CITY STREET SWEEPER GASPED IN AWE.
TO THINK OF IT! ME – HOB-NOBBING WITH A MEMBER OF THE IMPERIAL FAMILY!

THAT NIGHT, THE FALSE SIMBAL SUMMONED HIS NEW VALET IN HIS LUXURY VILLA...
LAY OUT MY EVENING ATTIRE, PORSHO. I AM ATTENDING A RECEPTION AT THE IMPERIAL PALACE – AT THE INVITATION OF LIEUTENANT JANNO.
VERY GOOD, SIR.

LATER, AMIDST THE POMP AND PAGEANTRY OF AN IMPERIAL RECEPTION, THE EX-STREET SWEEPER WAS INTRODUCED TO TRIGO HIMSELF!
HOW DO YOU DO. ANY FRIEND OF JANNO'S IS A FRIEND OF MINE.
I MUST BE DREAMING... I MUST...
SIRE, MAY I PRESENT MY VERY GOOD FRIEND, SIMBAL.

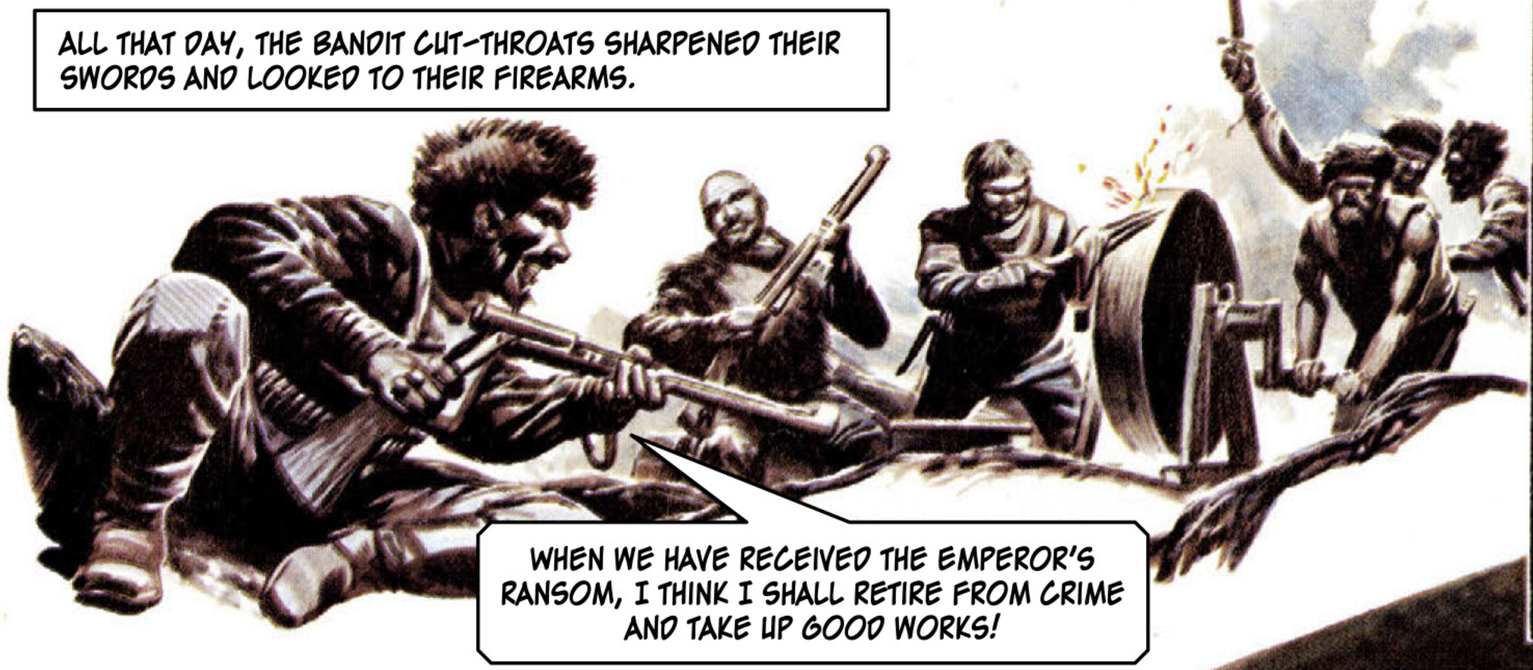
IT WAS NOT TILL HIS FOURTH VISIT TO THE SAFE DEPOSIT VAULT BENEATH THE TRIGAN IMPERIAL BANK THAT KRUSI WAS ABLE TO VIEW HIS NEW-FOUND FORTUNE WITH EQUANIMITY.
ONE GETS QUITE USED TO BEING RICH. WHAT SHALL I TAKE TO SEE ME THROUGH THE WEEK?
A POCKET FULL OF GEMS?... A FEW MILLION ZERST NOTES?
OLIVER FREY
HIS LUXURY HOVER-AUTO WAS WAITING.
TAKE ME TO THE AIR FLEET BASE, GAVO. I HAVE AN APPOINTMENT WITH LIEUTENANT JANNO.
YES, SIR.
DURING THE PAST LUNAR MONTH, THE FALSE SIMBAL AND THE EMPEROR'S NEPHEW HAD STRUCK UP A FIRM FRIENDSHIP. THAT AFTERNOON THEY PLAYED ELEKTON'S NEWEST GAME - RO-BALL.
HAH!
WELL HIT!
YOU PLAY WELL, SIMBAL. BEING A MILLIONAIRE OBVIOUSLY DOESN'T PREVENT YOU FROM KEEPING IN GOOD PHYSICAL SHAPE.
AH, JANNO, I'VE ALWAYS TAKEN PLENTY OF OUTDOOR EXERCISE, YOU SEE.
WHAT'S STREET-SWEEPING BUT OUTDOOR EXERCISE?

ARRIVING BACK AT HIS LUXURY VILLA, KRUSI WAS SURPRISED TO FIND THAT HE COULD NOT SWITCH ON THE LIGHTS IN HIS BEDROOM.
STRANGE...
NEXT INSTANT...
AAAAGH!
KRUSI GRASPED AT HIS ATTACKER WITH ONE HAND...SWUNG WITH THE OTHER.
TAKE THAT, WHOEVER YOU ARE!
UUUUGH!
WITH A CRY OF PAIN THE INTRUDER RACED OUT INTO THE DARKNESS.
NO POINT IN GOING AFTER HIM. HE MAY BE CARRYING A FIREARM...
HE RANG FOR HIS VALET, AND TOGETHER THEY FIXED THE LIGHTS.
IT SEEMS THAT I DISTURBED A BURGLAR AT WORK, PORSHO.
INDEED IT DOES, SIR. I NEVER HEARD A THING.
THE FOLLOWING DAWN, BACK IN THE BANDIT CAMP ON THE HILLCREST IN FAR-OFF CATO...
WE HAVE A MESSAGE FROM CHANGO, WHO IS CLOSELY INVESTIGATING THE CUR WHO TOOK SIMBAL'S IDENTITY. HE MAKES FREQUENT VISITS TO THE BANK AND IS A CLOSE FRIEND OF NONE OTHER THAN JANNO.
JANNO!
COULD WE NOT USE THE IMPOSTER AS BAIT, TO KIDNAP JANNO?
GOOD THINKING, MY FRIEND! BUT...
THE BANDIT LEADER GRINNED SAVAGELY.
BETTER STILL. WE WILL USE HIM AS BAIT TO CATCH A BIGGER FISH!
TRIGO HIMSELF! WITH AN EMPEROR'S RANSOM, WE CAN FORGET THE TREASURE IN THE BANK!


KRUSI AND HIS NEW FRIEND, JANNO, WERE WATER-SPORTING IN TRIGAN CITY HARBOUR.
THAT'S A SPLENDID YACHT OF YOURS.
OLIVER FREY
GLAD YOU LIKE IT, JANNO. I HAVE TWO OF THEM, OF COURSE, IN CASE ONE OF THEM BREAKS DOWN.
LATER, RELAXING BY THE YACHT'S SWIMMING POOL, THE FALSE SIMBAL CHATTED WITH HIS FRIEND.
I GREATLY ADMIRE YOUR UNCLE THE EMPEROR. A VERY FINE PERSON.
YES, SIMBAL. AND BASICALLY A VERY SIMPLE PERSON – BORN OF SIMPLE VORG STOCK. WHAT HE MISSES MOST IS CONTACT WITH THE ORDINARY COMMON PEOPLE OF HIS MIGHTY EMPIRE.
MY DEAR FELLOW. UNCLE TRIGO WOULD BE DELIGHTED! NOTHING WOULD SUIT HIM BETTER THAN TO TAKE AN INFORMAL HOLIDAY. INCOGNITO, OF COURSE...
GREATLY DARING, THE EX-STREET SWEEPER PUT FORWARD A SUGGESTION...
I – I KNOW IT'S VERY PRESUMPTUOUS OF ME, JANNO. BUT – I WONDER – WOULD THE IMPERIAL MAJESTY LIKE TO COME ON A CRUISING HOLIDAY IN THIS YACHT? TO GET AWAY FROM AFFAIRS OF THE STATE FOR A WHILE, YOU KNOW.

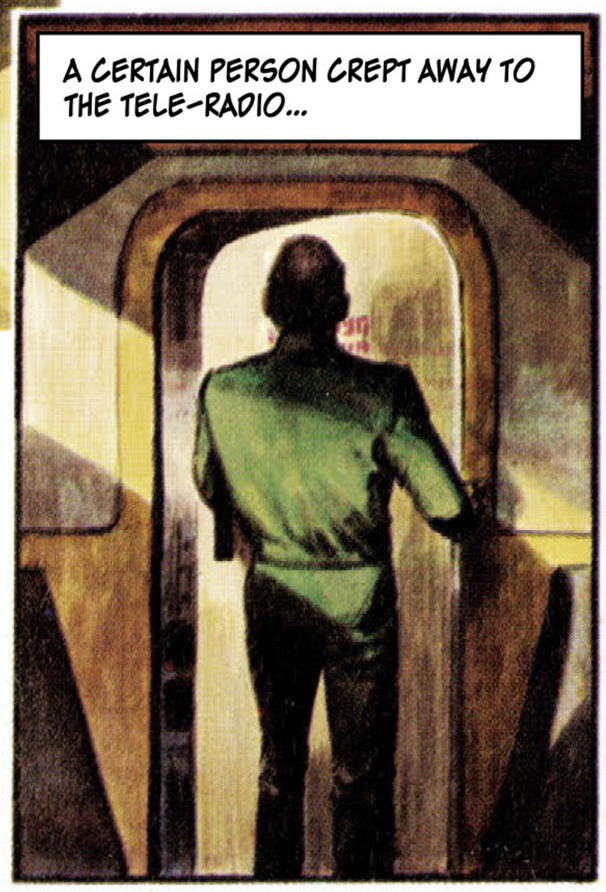
BY DAWN NEXT DAY, THE NEWS ARRIVED IN THE BANDIT CAMP IN FAR-OFF CATO.
THE GREAT OPPORTUNITY PRESENTS ITSELF. NEWS HAS JUST COME FROM CHANGO THAT TRIGO IS SPENDING A HOLIDAY ON THE IMPOSTER'S YACHT.

AS SOON AS WE RECEIVE THE SIGNAL FROM CHANGO THAT TRIGO HAS BOARDED THE YACHT – WE STRIKE!

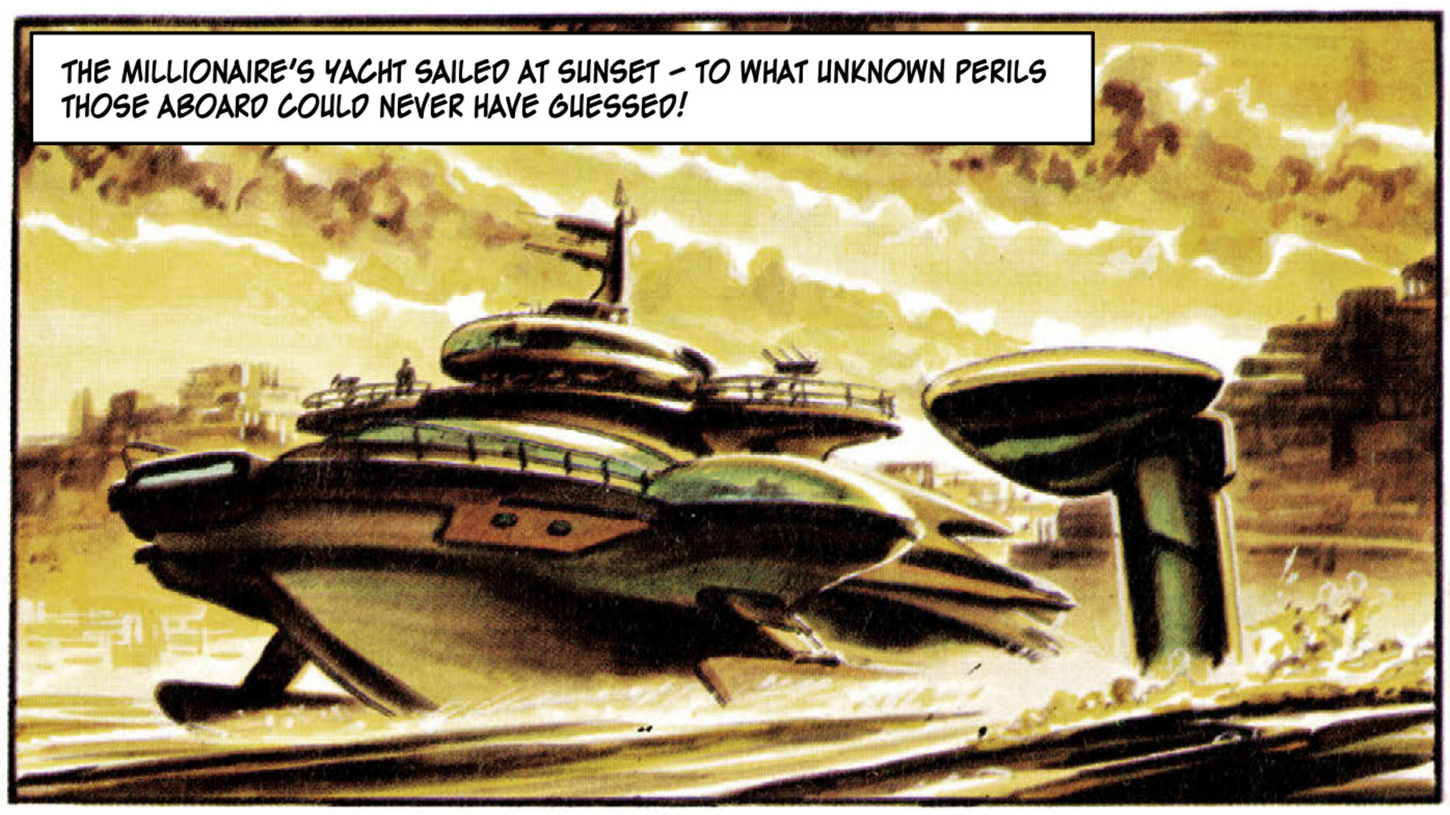

ALL THAT DAY, THE BANDIT CUT-THROATS SHARPENED THEIR SWORDS AND LOOKED TO THEIR FIREARMS.
WHEN WE HAVE RECEIVED THE EMPEROR'S RANSOM, I THINK I SHALL RETIRE FROM CRIME AND TAKE UP GOOD WORKS!

ON THE SAY OF TRIGO'S ARRIVAL ABOARD THE YACHT, THE FORMER TRIGAN CITY COUNCIL STREET SWEEPER WAS A MASS OF NERVES.
HERE COMES THE EMPEROR! IS ALL IN READINESS? YOU HAVE FORGOTTEN NONE OF MY INSTRUCTIONS, PORSHO – AND YOU, GAVO?
ALL IS READY, SIR.
TO THE LAST DETAIL, SIR.

TRIGO GREETED HIS HOST WITH HIS TYPICAL, FRIENDLY INFORMALITY.
IMPERIAL MAJESTY! SUCH AN HONOUR...
DON'T ADDRESS ME AS IMPERIAL MAJESTY, SIMBAL. REMEMBER THAT I AM TRAVELLING INCOGNITO. PLEASE CALL ME, SIMPLY 'FRIEND'.


A CERTAIN PERSON CREPT AWAY TO THE TELE-RADIO...

...THE CHAUFFEUR, GAVO!
THE 'FRIEND' HAS ARRIVED ABOARD! COMMENCE THE OPERATION!


THE MILLIONAIRE'S YACHT SAILED AT SUNSET – TO WHAT UNKNOWN PERILS THOSE ABOARD COULD NEVER HAVE GUESSED!

ONCE THE YACHT WAS OUT OF SIGHT OF THE TRIGAN COASTLINE A SHOUT WENT UP FROM THE CONTROL PLATFORM...
ALARM! ALARM! WE ARE BEING ATTACKED!
IN THE DINING SALOON, HIS CRY BROUGHT THE COMPANY TO ITS FEET.
SEIZE WHAT WEAPONS YOU CAN.
ONE GLANCE ACROSS THE WATER WAS ENOUGH FOR JANNO.
BY ALL THE STARS.
THEY CAME...
OLIVER FREY
TRIGO LED THE RUSH TO THE UPPER DECK, SEIZING WHATEVER WEAPON CAME TO HAND.
PREPARE TO REPEL BOARDERS.

THE FIRST WAVE OF ATTACKERS DROPPED TO THE DECK!
HAH.
TRIGO DREW FIRST BLOOD.
AAAAAGH!
SNATCHING UP A FALLEN BLADE, THE EMPEROR OF THE TRIGANS LED THE COUNTER ATTACK!
ON THE CONTROL PLATFORM, THE COMMANDER OF THE YACHT SAW THE SECOND WAVE OF ATTACKERS COMING IN. HE SPUN HIS WHEEL...
GIVE ME FULL SPEED ON ALL ENGINES.
SWIFT AVOIDING ACTION ON THE COMMANDER'S PART BROUGHT DISASTER TO THE SECOND WAVE.
AAAAAGH!
EEEEEEHHH!
TRIGO AND HIS COMPANIONS DISPOSED OF THE LAST OF THEIR OPPONENTS.
THAT SETTLES FOR THEM!
BUT THE BATTLE WAS FAR FROM OVER...
STAND READY! THEY WON'T MAKE THE SAME MISTAKE AS THE LAST LOT.
AND THEN...A VOICE FROM BEHIND THE EMPEROR!
PUT DOWN YOUR WEAPONS, OR THE EMPEROR PERISHES HERE AND NOW!
GAVO!... YOU?
KRUSI STARED IN ALARM AT HIS CHAUFFEUR.

AN UGLY SMILE PLAYED UPON THE LIPS OF THE TRAITOR WITH THE GUN.
I AM NOT GAVO, I AM CHANGO. AND I GIVE YOU TO THE COUNT OF THREE TO DROP YOUR WEAPONS.
AND THEN – A ROCKETING FIGURE!
UUUUUGH!
AT THE SAME INSTANT, THE LAST WAVE OF THE BANDITS DROPPED TO THE DECK.
HAH!
HOLA!
THEN FOLLOWED A BATTLE IN WHICH TRIGO AND HIS FOLLOWERS GAVE AS GOOD AS THEY RECEIVED...
AAAAGH!
...AND SOMETIMES...
LOOK YOUR LAST UPON THE SKY, TRIGAN!
OLIVER FREW

...BETTER THAN THEY RECEIVED!
EEEEGH!
A THOUSAND THANKS, JANNO!
WATCH YOUR STEP NEXT TIME, MY FRIEND!
NOT TILL ALL THE ATTACKERS WERE OVERPOWERED DID THE TRIGANS LOWER THEIR WEAPONS AND LOOK TOWARDS HE WHO HAD INTERVENED TO SAVE THE SITUATION...
IF IT HAD NOT BEEN FOR YOUR VALET, HERE, THEY WOULD HAVE CAPTURED THE EMPEROR.
HOW DID YOU – A VALET – LEARN TO FIGHT LIKE THAT?
THERE WAS SOME EMBARRASSMENT IN PORSHO'S MANNER AS HE REPLIED TO HIS EMPEROR...
IMPERIAL MAJESTY, I AM NOT A VALET. I HAVE THE HONOUR TO BE A MEMBER OF YOUR IMPERIAL MAJESTY'S SECRET SERVICE. CHANGO HAS BEEN KEEPING KRUSI UNDER OBSERVATION, WHILE I HAVE BEEN OBSERVING CHANGO.
ARE YOU TRYING TO TELL ME THAT MY OWN SECRET SERVICE HAS BEEN AWARE OF THE POSSIBILITY OF THIS DASTARDLY ATTACK, YET THEY HAVE NEVER EVEN WARNED ME?
SIRE, YOU WERE NEVER IN DANGER OF BEING KIDNAPPED AS I WILL DEMONSTRATE.
A BRIEF COMMAND INTO A MINIATURE DEEP-SEA RADIO-SENDER BROUGHT TO THE SURFACE A FIGHTING UNIT OF THE TRIGAN WAR-FLEET.
SURFACE NOW.
BY ALL THE STARS.
IN DUE COURSE, THE BANDITS HAVING BEEN CAPTURED, THE WHOLE SAGA OF KRUSI'S 'FORTUNE' WAS EXPLAINED TO HIM. HE HIMSELF TOOK HIS FRIEND JANNO AND THE POLICE TO THE SAFE-DEPOSIT VAULT.
SO IT'S ALL STOLEN, YOU TELL ME? WELL, I MIGHT HAVE KNOWN IT WAS ALL TOO GOOD TO LAST.
I'M AFRAID SO, MY FRIEND. AND IT WILL ALL HAVE TO BE RETURNED TO THE RIGHTFUL OWNERS.
I HAVE NO DOUBT, HOWEVER, THAT THERE WILL BE A REWARD.
IF THERE'S A REWARD, I SHALL DONATE IT TO CHARITY! I AM TIRED OF THIS MILLIONAIRE'S LIFE. I LONG FOR...FRESH AIR... OPEN SPACES...EXERCISE.
AND SO, KRUSI WENT BACK TO BEING A STREET SWEEPER FOR THE TRIGAN CITY COUNCIL. BUT SOME TIMES (NOT VERY OFTEN) HE DAY-DREAMED OF HIS BRIEF TIME OF WEALTH AND GLORY.

LXII

THE TRIGAN EMPIRE

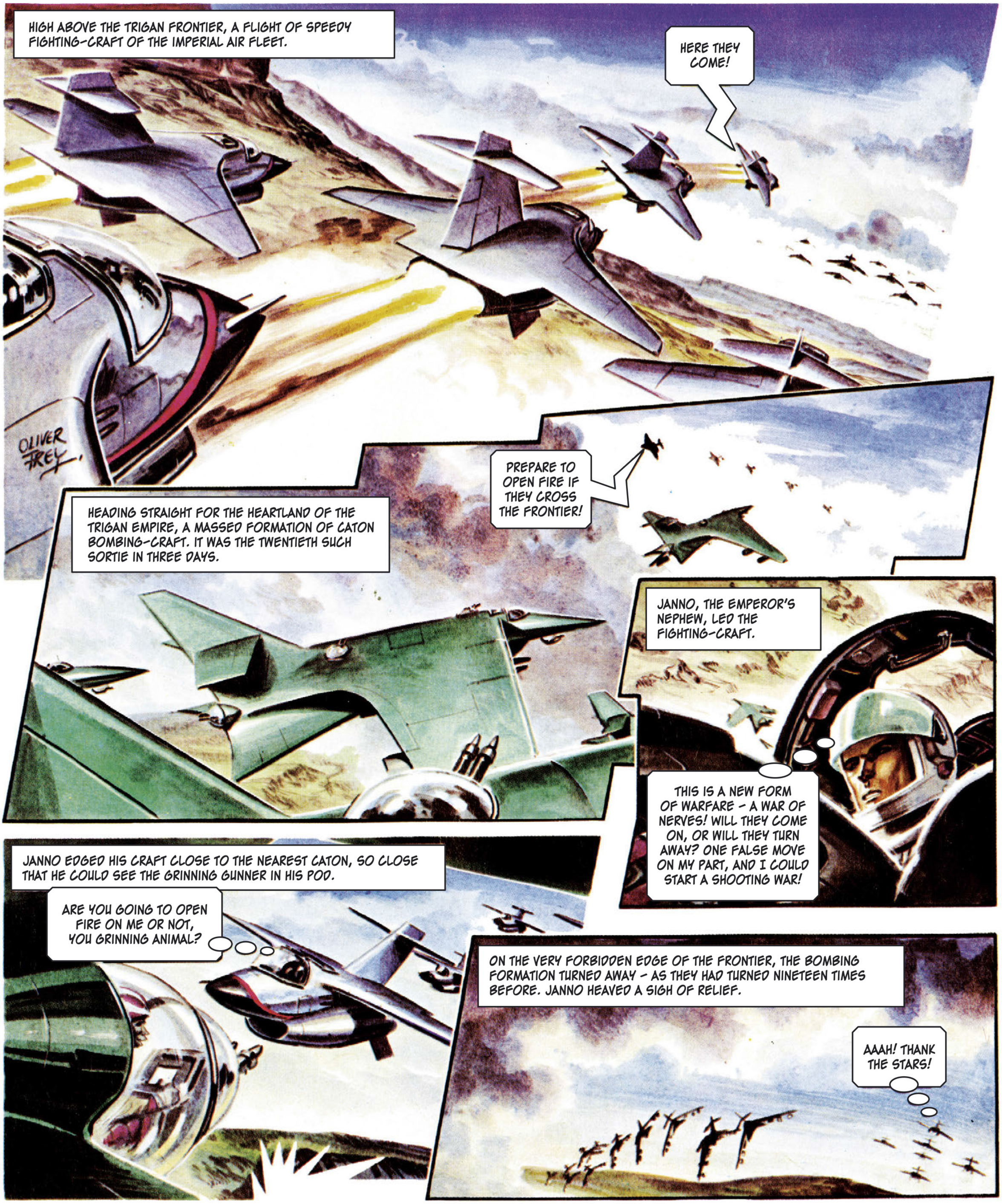
JANNO'S "OUT-OF-TIME" MIND

Originally published in ***Look and Learn*** 777 - 781

4th December 1976 – 8th January 1977

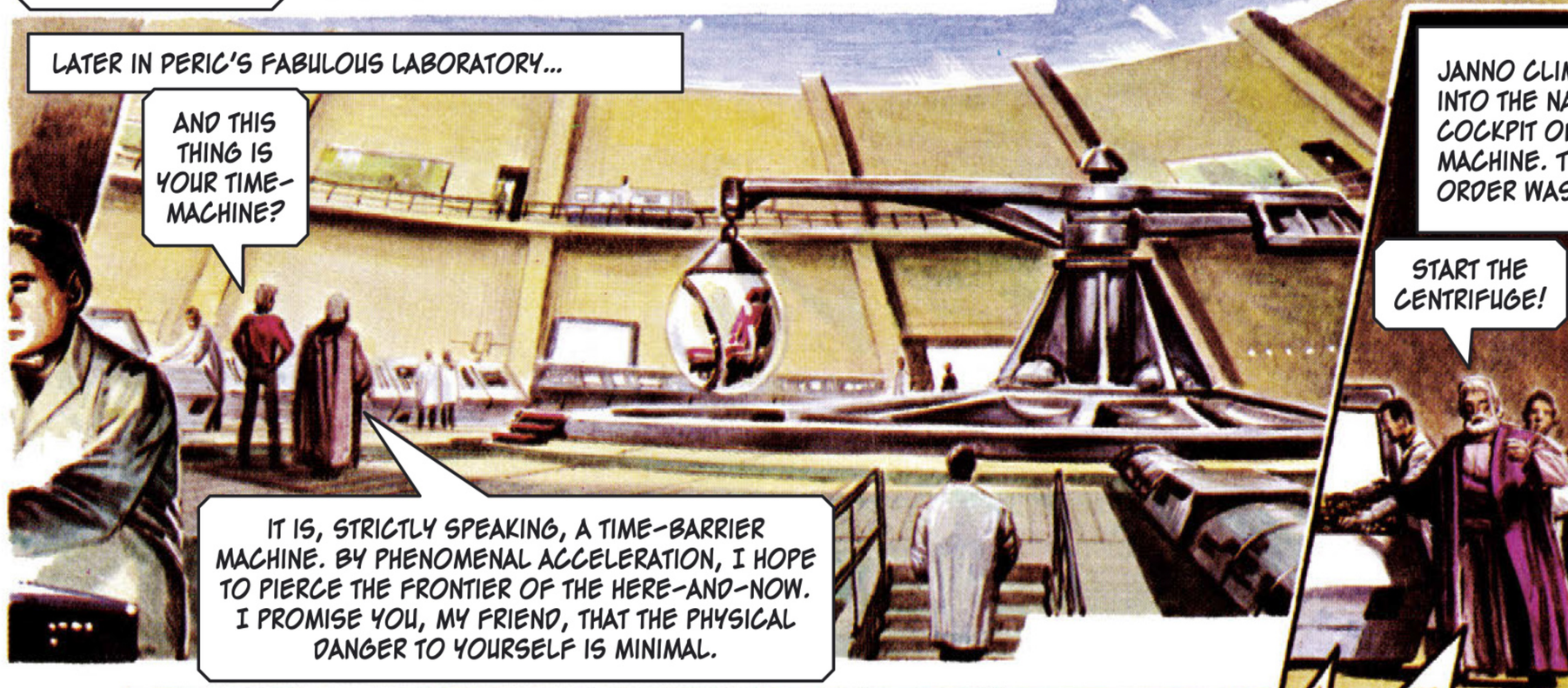
Story by Mike Butterworth

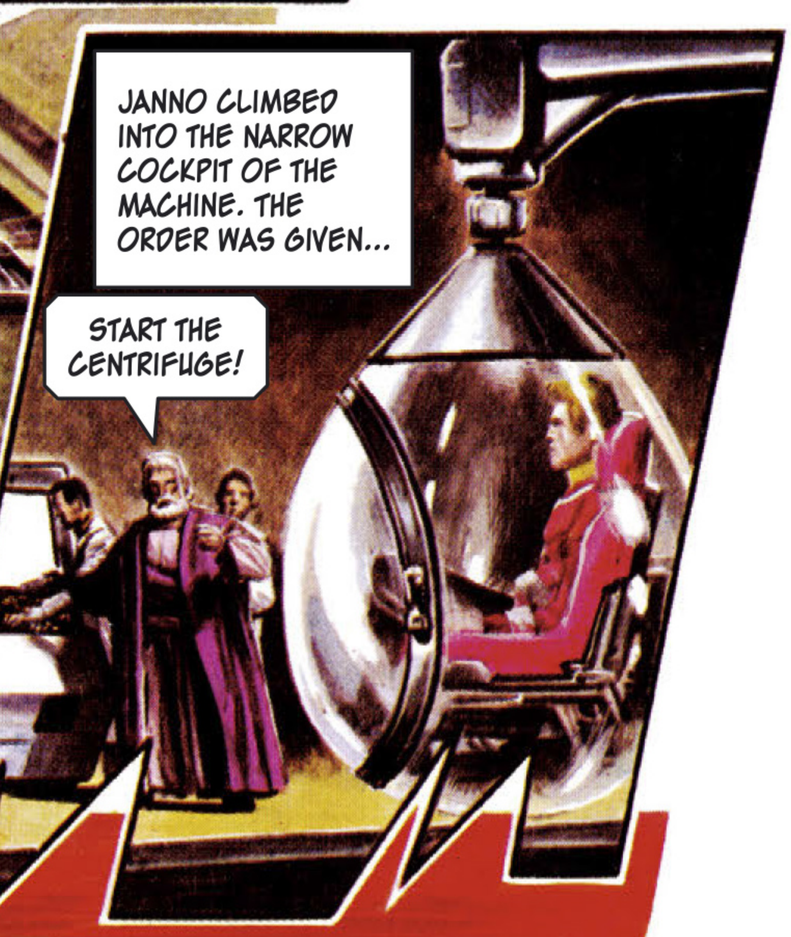
Art by Oliver Frey

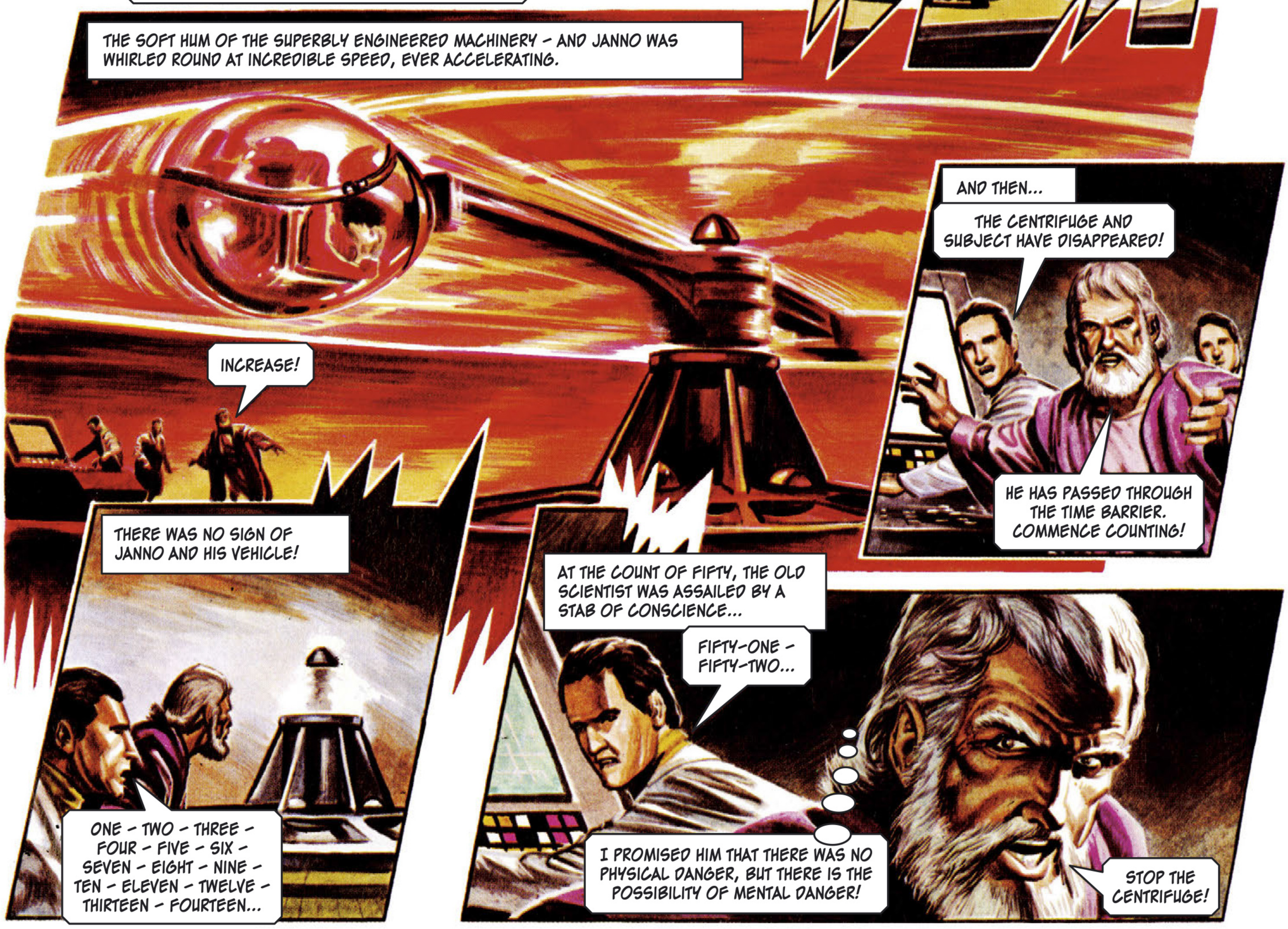

HIGH ABOVE THE TRIGAN FRONTIER, A FLIGHT OF SPEEDY FIGHTING-CRAFT OF THE IMPERIAL AIR FLEET.
HERE THEY COME!
OLIVER FREY
PREPARE TO OPEN FIRE IF THEY CROSS THE FRONTIER!
HEADING STRAIGHT FOR THE HEARTLAND OF THE TRIGAN EMPIRE, A MASSED FORMATION OF CATON BOMBING-CRAFT. IT WAS THE TWENTIETH SUCH SORTIE IN THREE DAYS.
JANNO, THE EMPEROR'S NEPHEW, LED THE FIGHTING-CRAFT.
THIS IS A NEW FORM OF WARFARE – A WAR OF NERVES! WILL THEY COME ON, OR WILL THEY TURN AWAY? ONE FALSE MOVE ON MY PART, AND I COULD START A SHOOTING WAR!
JANNO EDGED HIS CRAFT CLOSE TO THE NEAREST CATON, SO CLOSE THAT HE COULD SEE THE GRINNING GUNNER IN HIS POD.
ARE YOU GOING TO OPEN FIRE ON ME OR NOT, YOU GRINNING ANIMAL?
ON THE VERY FORBIDDEN EDGE OF THE FRONTIER, THE BOMBING FORMATION TURNED AWAY – AS THEY HAD TURNED NINETEEN TIMES BEFORE. JANNO HEAVED A SIGH OF RELIEF.
AAAH! THANK THE STARS!

THE COMMANDER OF THE TRIGAN AIR FLEET BASE WAS ACCOMPANIED BY THE GREAT SCIENTIST PERIC, WHEN HIS PILOTS RETURNED. HIS SHREWD EYES DISCERNED THE STRAIN ON THEIR YOUNG FACES.
HOW ARE THEY STANDING UP TO THE PSYCHOLOGICAL PRESSURE?
REMARKABLY WELL, PERIC. BUT GIVE IT ANOTHER LUNAR MONTH OF THIS WAR OF NERVES, AND THEY'LL BE IN NO STATE TO FIGHT A SHOOTING WAR – IF IT COMES!

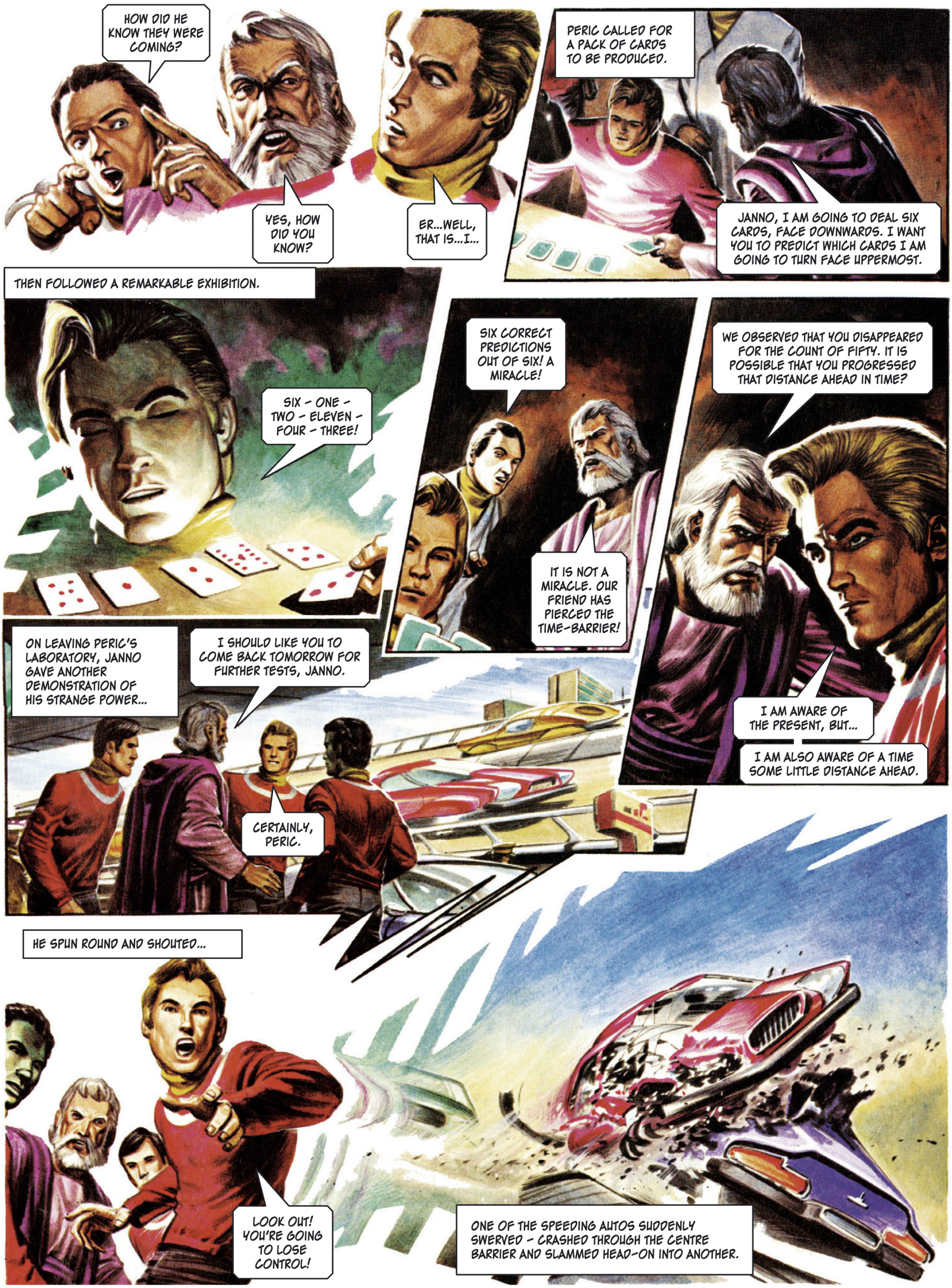
PERIC AND JANNO WERE OLD FRIENDS.
MUCH AS I HATE TO IMPOSE UPON YOU, JANNO, YOU WILL REMEMBER YOUR PROMISE FOR TODAY?
TO ASSIST IN ONE OF YOUR EXPERIMENTS? HOW COULD I REFUSE? I AM AT YOUR SERVICE, PERIC.


LATER IN PERIC'S FABULOUS LABORATORY...
AND THIS THING IS YOUR TIME-MACHINE?
IT IS, STRICTLY SPEAKING, A TIME-BARRIER MACHINE. BY PHENOMENAL ACCELERATION, I HOPE TO PIERCE THE FRONTIER OF THE HERE-AND-NOW. I PROMISE YOU, MY FRIEND, THAT THE PHYSICAL DANGER TO YOURSELF IS MINIMAL.


JANNO CLIMBED INTO THE NARROW COCKPIT OF THE MACHINE. THE ORDER WAS GIVEN...
START THE CENTRIFUGE!


THE SOFT HUM OF THE SUPERBLY ENGINEERED MACHINERY – AND JANNO WAS WHIRLED ROUND AT INCREDIBLE SPEED, EVER ACCELERATING.
INCREASE!
THERE WAS NO SIGN OF JANNO AND HIS VEHICLE!
ONE – TWO – THREE – FOUR – FIVE – SIX – SEVEN – EIGHT – NINE – TEN – ELEVEN – TWELVE – THIRTEEN – FOURTEEN...
AND THEN...
THE CENTRIFUGE AND SUBJECT HAVE DISAPPEARED!
HE HAS PASSED THROUGH THE TIME BARRIER. COMMENCE COUNTING!
AT THE COUNT OF FIFTY, THE OLD SCIENTIST WAS ASSAILED BY A STAB OF CONSCIENCE...
FIFTY-ONE – FIFTY-TWO...
I PROMISED HIM THAT THERE WAS NO PHYSICAL DANGER, BUT THERE IS THE POSSIBILITY OF MENTAL DANGER!
STOP THE CENTRIFUGE!

AS THE DECELERATION BEGAN, THE VEHICLE CONTAINING JANNO GRADUALLY REAPPEARED.
OLIVER FREY
THE GREAT SCIENTIST'S VOICE WAS ANXIOUS, URGENT, AS HE QUESTIONED HIS YOUNG FRIEND.
JANNO, ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?
YES, I'M FINE, PERIC. ONLY...
ONLY WHAT, JANNO?
ONLY – I FEEL A LITTLE STRANGE IN MY HEAD.
AND THEN...
WHY! HERE COME KEREN AND ROFFA.
KEREN AND...?
WHERE?
ON AN IMPULSE, PERIC COUNTED UNDER HIS BREATH TO FIFTY, AND THEN, INDEED, JANNO'S AIR FLEET COMRADES KEREN AND ROFFA CAME IN THE DOOR.
HELLO, JANNO!
ER – HELLO.
HOW DID THE TIME EXPERIMENT GO?

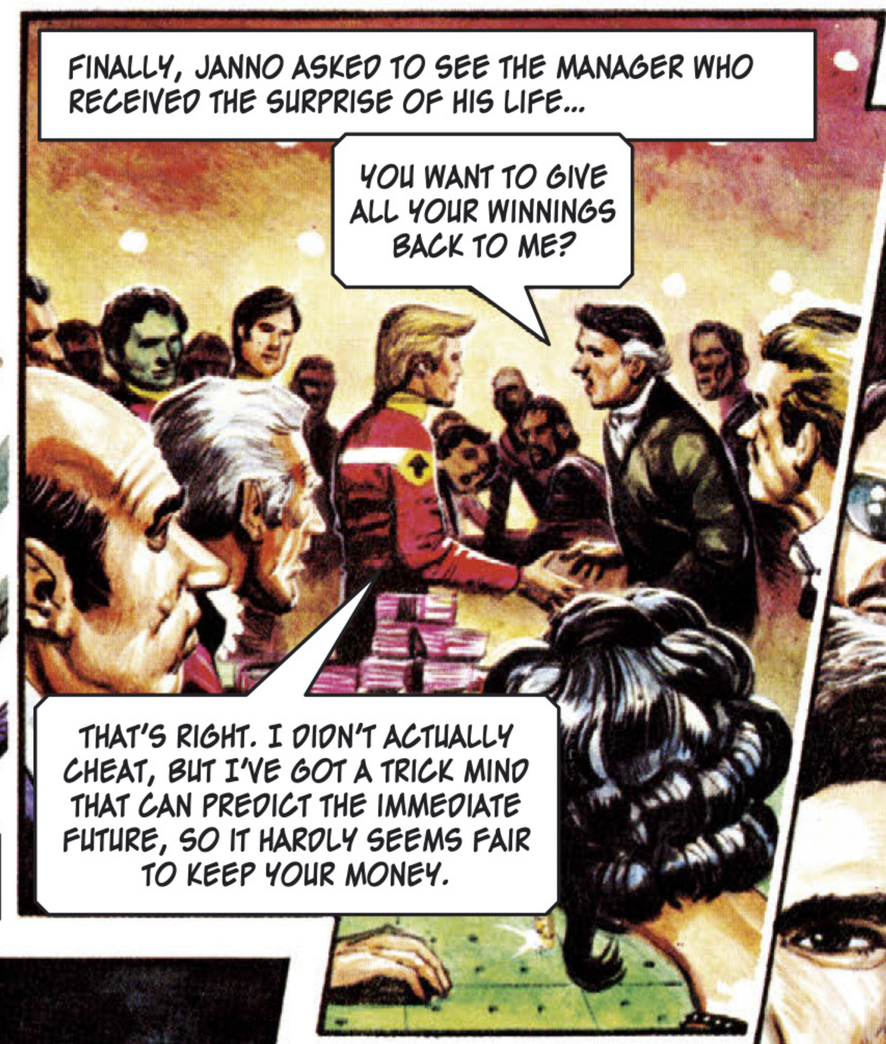

HOW DID HE KNOW THEY WERE COMING?
YES, HOW DID YOU KNOW?
ER...WELL, THAT IS...I...
PERIC CALLED FOR A PACK OF CARDS TO BE PRODUCED.
JANNO, I AM GOING TO DEAL SIX CARDS, FACE DOWNWARDS. I WANT YOU TO PREDICT WHICH CARDS I AM GOING TO TURN FACE UPPERMOST.
THEN FOLLOWED A REMARKABLE EXHIBITION.
SIX - ONE - TWO - ELEVEN - FOUR - THREE!
SIX CORRECT PREDICTIONS OUT OF SIX! A MIRACLE!
IT IS NOT A MIRACLE. OUR FRIEND HAS PIERCED THE TIME-BARRIER!
WE OBSERVED THAT YOU DISAPPEARED FOR THE COUNT OF FIFTY. IT IS POSSIBLE THAT YOU PROGRESSED THAT DISTANCE AHEAD IN TIME?
I AM AWARE OF THE PRESENT, BUT...
I AM ALSO AWARE OF A TIME SOME LITTLE DISTANCE AHEAD.
ON LEAVING PERIC'S LABORATORY, JANNO GAVE ANOTHER DEMONSTRATION OF HIS STRANGE POWER...
I SHOULD LIKE YOU TO COME BACK TOMORROW FOR FURTHER TESTS, JANNO.
CERTAINLY, PERIC.
HE SPUN ROUND AND SHOUTED...
LOOK OUT! YOU'RE GOING TO LOSE CONTROL!
ONE OF THE SPEEDING AUTOS SUDDENLY SWERVED - CRASHED THROUGH THE CENTRE BARRIER AND SLAMMED HEAD-ON INTO ANOTHER.

NEXT MORNING FOUND JANNO AND HIS FLIGHT ON PATROL ABOVE THE FRONTIER, WATCHING THE APPROACH OF ANOTHER MASSED BOMBING-FLEET FROM CATO.
HERE THEY COME AGAIN! STAND BY FOR TROUBLE!
ALL THE PILOTS WATCHED AND WAITED.
WILL THEY?
IS THE SHOOTING WAR GOING TO START AT LAST?
WILL THEY CROSS THE FRONTIER?
THEY'RE GOING TO TURN BACK AGAIN!
SURE ENOUGH, ON THE COUNT OF FIFTY, THE CATONS TURNED. IT WAS JUST ANOTHER CHAPTER IN THE WAR OF NERVES THEY WERE WAGING AGAINST THE TRIGAN AIR FLEET.
WHAT A RELIEF!
OLIVER FREY
BACK AT AIR-BASE, JANNO WAS CONGRATULATED.
THAT TRICK OF LOOKING INTO THE FUTURE CAME IN VERY HANDY.
YES, IT COULD BE EXTREMELY USEFUL IN A TIGHT CORNER. BY THE WAY, I'M THINKING OF DOING A PRIVATE EXPERIMENT OF MY OWN THIS EVENING. JUST FOR FUN...
COMING, YOU TWO?
THAT NIGHT, THE THREE FRIENDS DROVE TO A LUXURY ESTABLISHMENT OUTSIDE THE CITY.
I SAY, CAN WE AFFORD A PLACE LIKE THIS?
THIS IS WHERE MILLIONAIRES COME TO AMUSE THEMSELVES BY LOSING MONEY.
WE AREN'T GOING TO LOSE ANY MONEY, QUITE THE REVERSE!

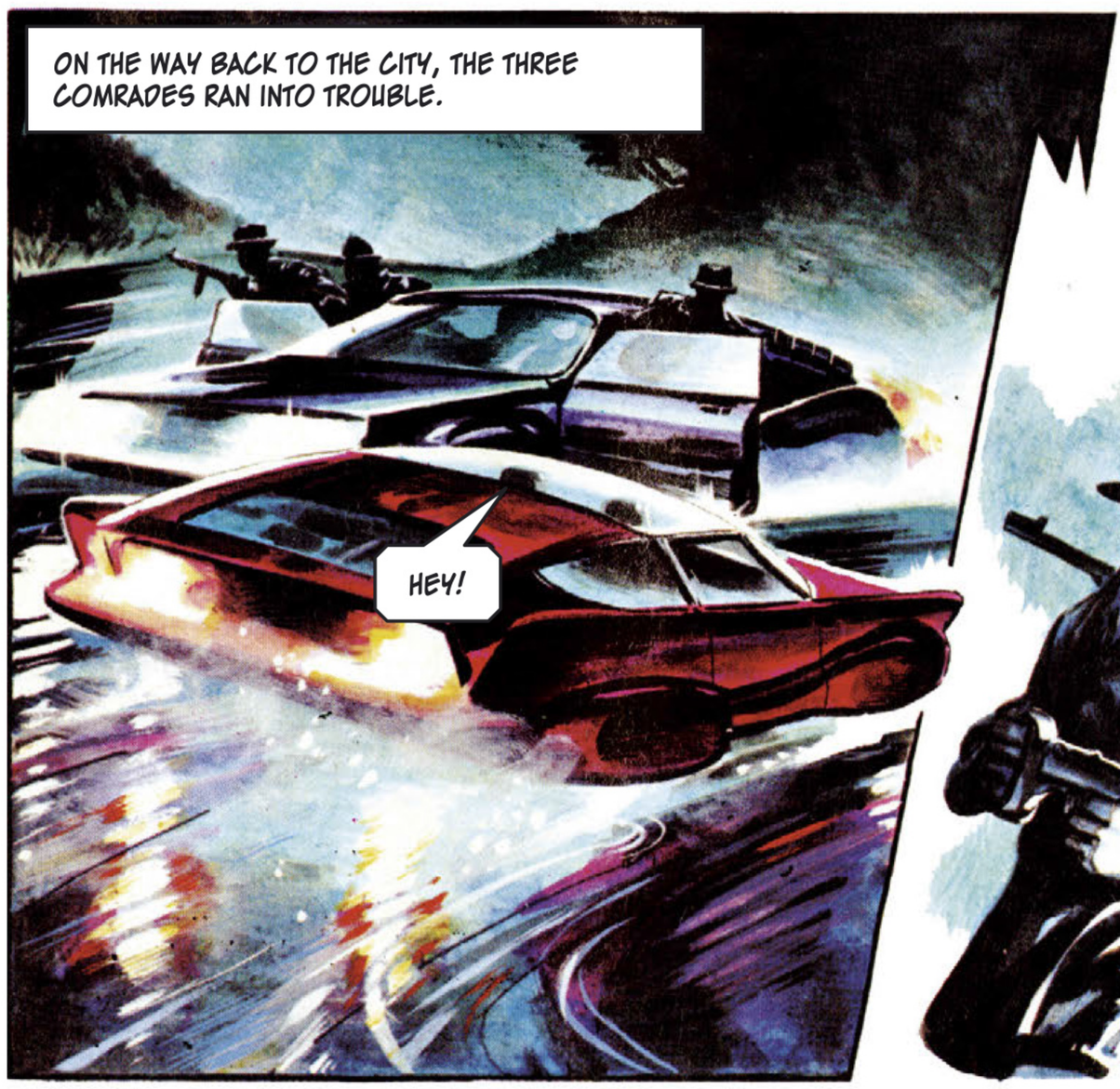
IN THAT HIGH-PRICED GAMBLING CLUB, MILLIONS OF ZERSTS CHANGED HANDS NIGHTLY ON THE TABLES.
PLACE YOUR BETS, MASTERS.
DON'T FORGET, YOU'RE GAMBLING WITH OUR MONTH'S PAY AS WELL AS YOURS!
STOP WORRYING!

JANNO WAITED FOR A LITTLE WHILE – AND THEN...
EVERYTHING ON SIX!
EVERYTHING!
OH, NO!
KEREN AND ROFFA NEED NOT HAVE WORRIED...
SIX WINS!
WHAT DID I TELL YOU?

THEN FOLLOWED A SUCCESSION OF WINDS, THE LIKE OF WHICH HAD NEVER BEEN WITNESSED AT THE CLUB.
SEVEN...
THIRTEEN...
EIGHT...
ZERO...
ZERO WINS!

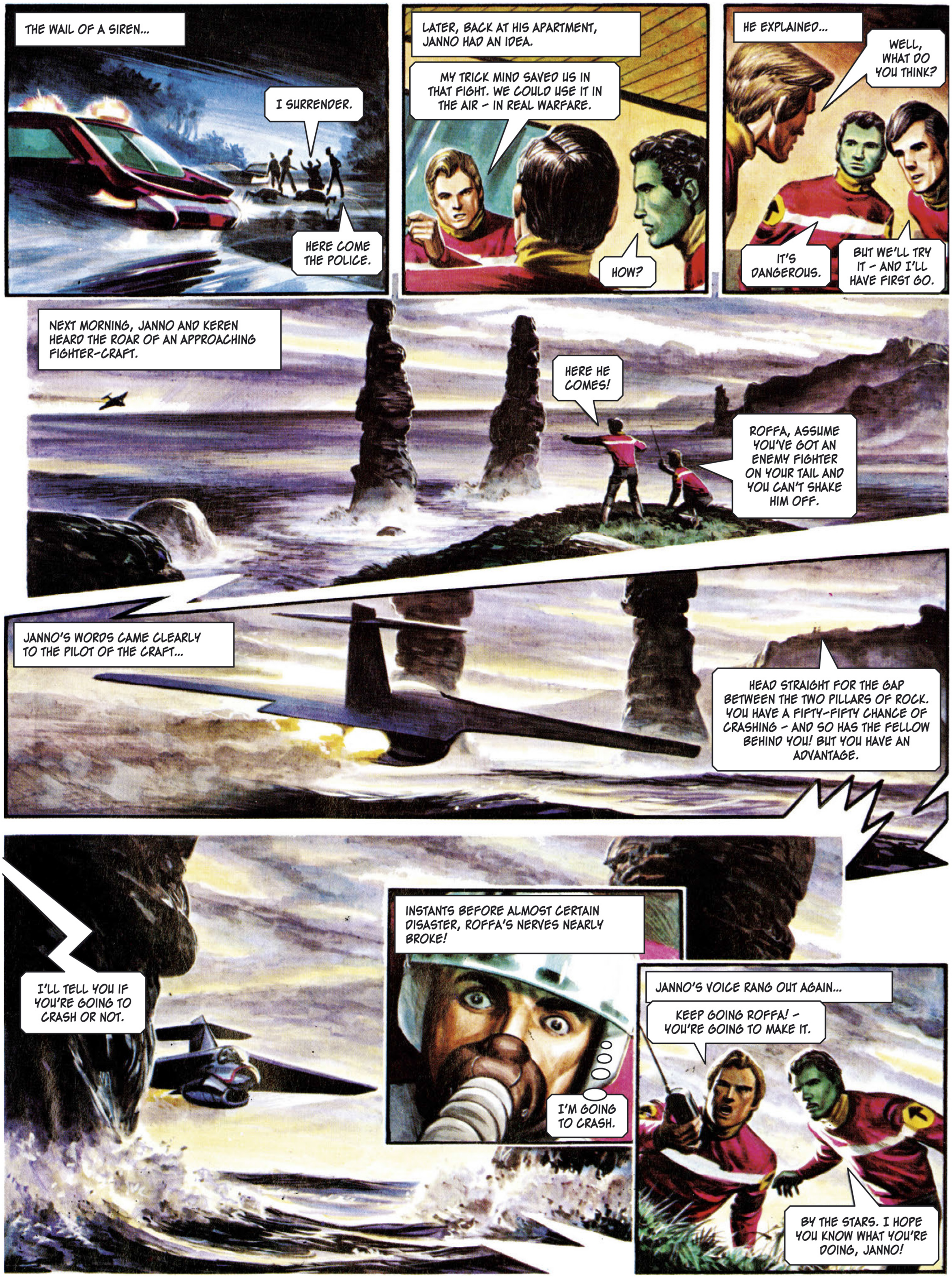

FINALLY, JANNO ASKED TO SEE THE MANAGER WHO RECEIVED THE SURPRISE OF HIS LIFE...
YOU WANT TO GIVE ALL YOUR WINNINGS BACK TO ME?
THAT'S RIGHT. I DIDN'T ACTUALLY CHEAT, BUT I'VE GOT A TRICK MIND THAT CAN PREDICT THE IMMEDIATE FUTURE, SO IT HARDLY SEEMS FAIR TO KEEP YOUR MONEY.

THREE HARD-EYED INDIVIDUALS OVERHEARD AND COMMENTED.
A TRICK MIND THAT CAN PREDICT THE FUTURE.
THAT FELLOW'S WORTH A FORTUNE.
WE'LL HAVE HIM.


ON THE WAY BACK TO THE CITY, THE THREE COMRADES RAN INTO TROUBLE.
HEY!

BIG TROUBLE!
SHOOT THE OTHER TWO – AND GET HIM ALIVE!

JANNO LEAPT OUT OF HIS AUTO, CALLING TO HIS COMRADES.
DON'T WORRY ABOUT THEIR GUNS. AT THEM! WE'LL HAVE THEM BEATEN BY THE COUNT OF FIFTY.
ROFFA HEARD THE THUD OF AN UNDISCHARGED PROJECTILE. NEXT INSTANT, HIS FIST CONNECTED.
ROFFA RUSHED STRAIGHT FOR THE MUZZLE OF A LEVELLED GUN, CONVINCED HIS LAST MOMENT HAD COME.
OLIVER FREY
I MUST BE OUT OF MY MIND!
DON'T WORRY, ROFFA. HIS GUN WILL JAM.
ANOTHER SHOUTED INSTRUCTION FROM JANNO.
KEREN OBEYED AND...
KEREN! THROW YOURSELF FLAT.
BY ALL THE STARS!


THE WAIL OF A SIREN...
I SURRENDER.
HERE COME THE POLICE.
LATER, BACK AT HIS APARTMENT, JANNO HAD AN IDEA.
MY TRICK MIND SAVED US IN THAT FIGHT. WE COULD USE IT IN THE AIR – IN REAL WARFARE.
HOW?
HE EXPLAINED...
WELL, WHAT DO YOU THINK?
IT'S DANGEROUS.
BUT WE'LL TRY IT – AND I'LL HAVE FIRST GO.
NEXT MORNING, JANNO AND KEREN HEARD THE ROAR OF AN APPROACHING FIGHTER-CRAFT.
HERE HE COMES!
ROFFA, ASSUME YOU'VE GOT AN ENEMY FIGHTER ON YOUR TAIL AND YOU CAN'T SHAKE HIM OFF.
JANNO'S WORDS CAME CLEARLY TO THE PILOT OF THE CRAFT...
HEAD STRAIGHT FOR THE GAP BETWEEN THE TWO PILLARS OF ROCK. YOU HAVE A FIFTY-FIFTY CHANCE OF CRASHING – AND SO HAS THE FELLOW BEHIND YOU! BUT YOU HAVE AN ADVANTAGE.
I'LL TELL YOU IF YOU'RE GOING TO CRASH OR NOT.
INSTANTS BEFORE ALMOST CERTAIN DISASTER, ROFFA'S NERVES NEARLY BROKE!
I'M GOING TO CRASH.
JANNO'S VOICE RANG OUT AGAIN...
KEEP GOING ROFFA! – YOU'RE GOING TO MAKE IT.
BY THE STARS. I HOPE YOU KNOW WHAT YOU'RE DOING, JANNO!

ROFFA'S SPEEDY FIGHTING-CRAFT PASSED BETWEEN THE TWO PILLARS OF ROCK WITH A HANDSBREADTH TO SPARE EITHER SIDE!
OLIVER FREY
LATER, BACK AT THE AIR BASE...
YOU GAVE ME A BAD FEW MOMENTS, JANNO - BUT YOUR IDEA WORKS!
IT MEANS WE CAN TAKE UNDREAMED OF CHANCES - PROVIDED JANNO'S AT HAND TO PREDICT THE OUTCOME!
JANNO'S FLIGHT WERE FIRST TO SIGHT THE MASSED CATONS.
THAT MORNING, THE CALL TO ACTION WENT OUT AGAIN!
CATON BOMBING-FLEET APPROACHING THE FRONTIER! ALL PILOTS GET AIRBORNE!
WE'LL CLOSE WITH THEM. DON'T LOSE YOUR HEADS AND OPEN FIRE.
WAS THIS ANOTHER EPISODE IN THE "WAR OF NERVES", OR DID THE CATONS MEAN BUSINESS? JANNO DREW SO CLOSE THAT HE COULD SEE THE GRINNING GUNNER IN THE NEAREST CRAFT.
I WONDER IF?...
NEXT INSTANT, JANNO KNEW!
HE'S GOING TO OPEN FIRE AND BLOW ME UP!
HIS FINGER STABBED THE ESCAPE BUTTON!
HE WAS JETTISONED CLEAR OF HIS CRAFT AND SHOUTED ORDERS INTO HIS TRANSMITTER BEFORE HIS CRAFT EXPLODED UNDER A HAIL OF PROJECTILES!
ALL TRIGANS TO THE ATTACK!

THE CATONS LOST THE SPLIT SECOND ADVANTAGE THEY HAD GAINED BY DOWNING THE TRIGAN LEADER. JANNO HAD A GRANDSTAND SEAT TO HIS COMRADES' DEVASTATING COUNTER-ATTACK.
SECOND SECTION – DISENGAGE AND PREPARE TO RECEIVE THE ENEMY FIGHTERS!
EVEN AFTER HE HAD LANDED IN THE SEA, HE WAS ABLE TO CONTINUE DIRECTING THE BATTLE – WITH THE EXTRA AID OF HIS VIEW INTO THE FUTURE.
THE TRIGAN FIGHTERS' DEVASTATING RESPONSE DASHED THE CATONS' HOPES. MANY FELL. THE REST SCATTERED BACK TO THEIR HOMELAND.
KEREN! DEAL WITH THE FELLOW AHEAD OF YOU – DON'T BOTHER ABOUT THE ONE BEHIND, HE'S GOING TO MISS YOU!...
WELL DONE, KEREN!
SOME DAYS AFTER THE VICTORY, JANNO CALLED AT PERIC'S LABORATORY WITH AN URGENT REQUEST TO MAKE OF HIS OLD FRIEND.
MY MIND TRICK HAS PLAYED ITS PART FOR THE TRIGAN EMPIRE, BUT LIVING ON TWO TIME SCALES IS A NERVE-WRACKING BUSINESS. DO YOU THINK I COULD HAVE ANOTHER RIDE IN TIME – THIS TIME IN REVERSE?
IN REVERSE? – IT'S WORTH TRYING.
JANNO CLIMBED INTO THE MACHINE'S COCKPIT. THE CENTRIFUGE WAS STARTED. HE AND THE VEHICLE DISAPPEARED FOR THE COUNT OF FIFTY – AND THEN SLOWLY RETURNED.
BY ALL LOGIC, HE SHOULD HAVE RETURNED FROM THE IMMEDIATE FUTURE TO THE HERE-AND-NOW.
THE EXPERIMENT WAS A SUCCESS – AS JANNO SMILINGLY TESTIFIED...
PERIC, I DON'T KNOW WHAT'S GOING TO HAPPEN NEXT!...
AND THE RELIEF IS TREMENDOUS!

LXIV

THE TRIGAN EMPIRE

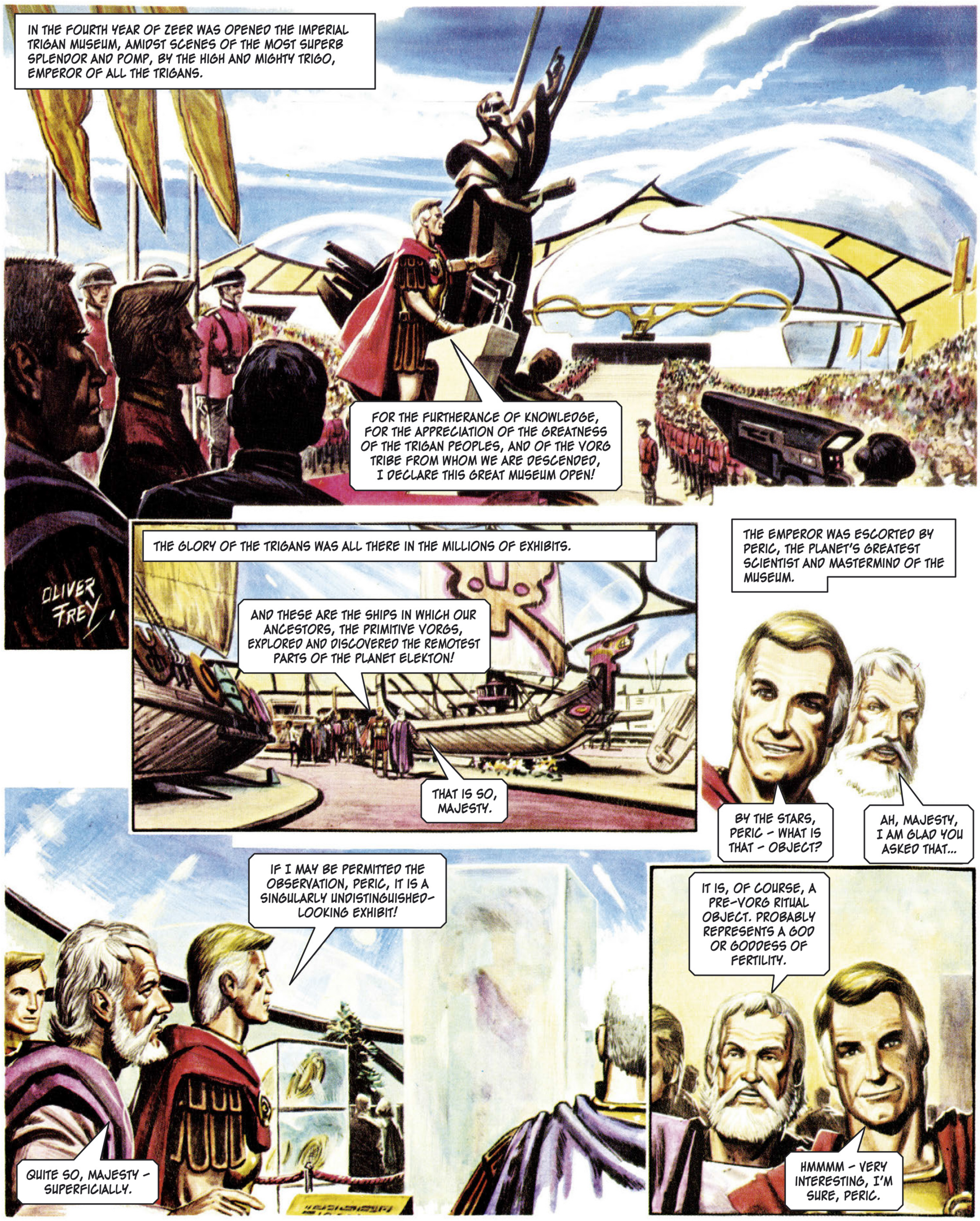
SEDDA'S PLOT

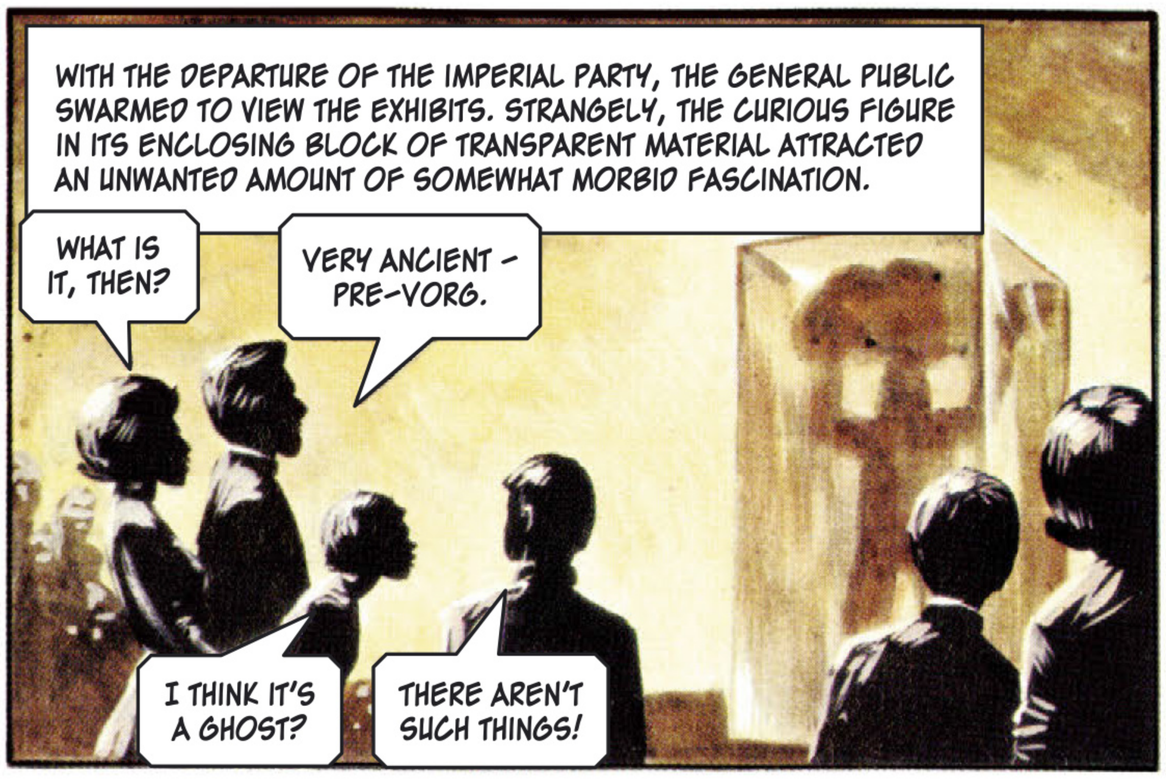
Originally published in ***Look and Learn*** 782 - 791

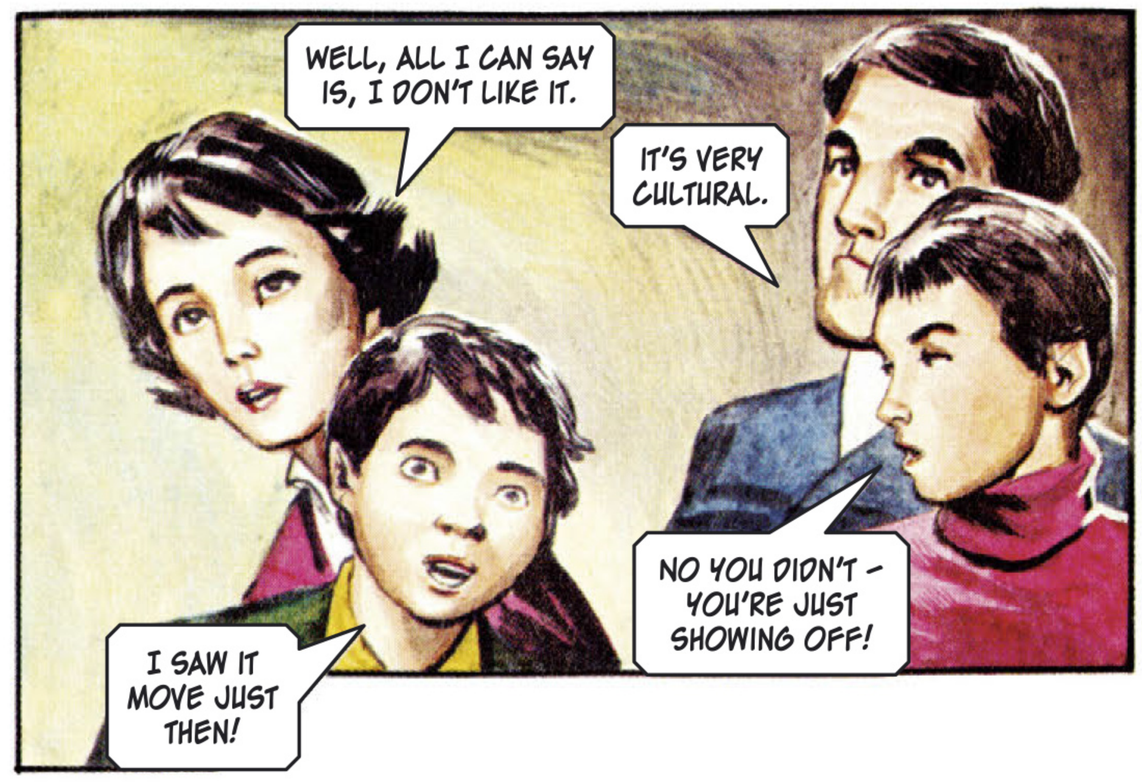
15th January 1977 – 12th March 1977

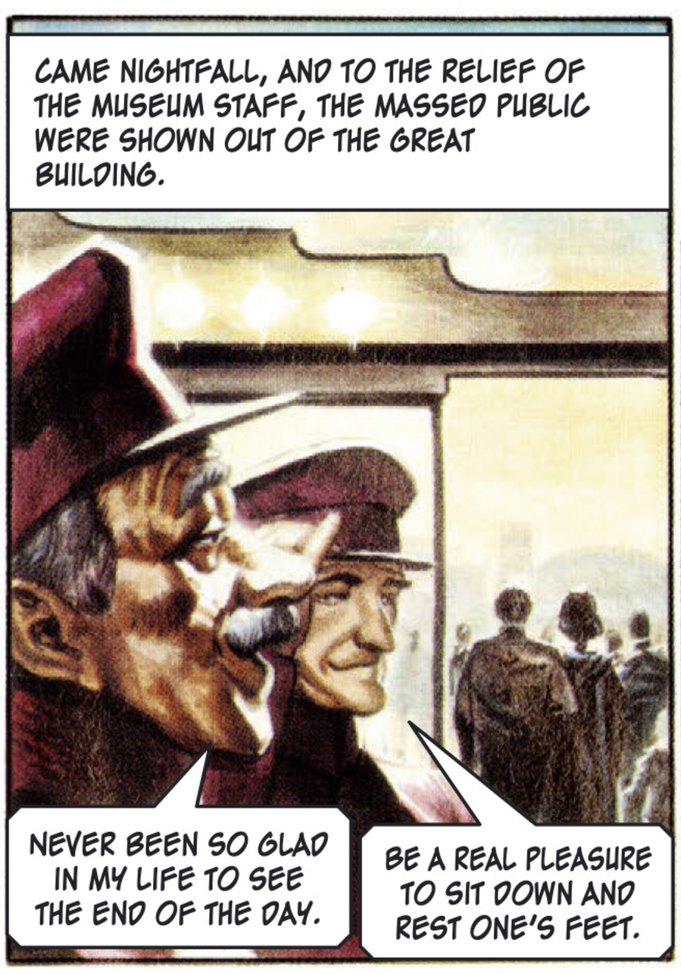
Story by Mike Butterworth

Art by Oliver Frey


IN THE FOURTH YEAR OF ZEER WAS OPENED THE IMPERIAL TRIGAN MUSEUM, AMIDST SCENES OF THE MOST SUPERB SPLENDOR AND POMP, BY THE HIGH AND MIGHTY TRIGO, EMPEROR OF ALL THE TRIGANS.
FOR THE FURTHERANCE OF KNOWLEDGE, FOR THE APPRECIATION OF THE GREATNESS OF THE TRIGAN PEOPLES, AND OF THE VORG TRIBE FROM WHOM WE ARE DESCENDED, I DECLARE THIS GREAT MUSEUM OPEN!
OLIVER FREY
THE GLORY OF THE TRIGANS WAS ALL THERE IN THE MILLIONS OF EXHIBITS.
AND THESE ARE THE SHIPS IN WHICH OUR ANCESTORS, THE PRIMITIVE VORGS, EXPLORED AND DISCOVERED THE REMOTEST PARTS OF THE PLANET ELEKTON!
THAT IS SO, MAJESTY.
THE EMPEROR WAS ESCORTED BY PERIC, THE PLANET'S GREATEST SCIENTIST AND MASTERMIND OF THE MUSEUM.
BY THE STARS, PERIC – WHAT IS THAT – OBJECT?
AH, MAJESTY, I AM GLAD YOU ASKED THAT...
IF I MAY BE PERMITTED THE OBSERVATION, PERIC, IT IS A SINGULARLY UNDISTINGUISHED-LOOKING EXHIBIT!
QUITE SO, MAJESTY – SUPERFICIALLY.
IT IS, OF COURSE, A PRE-VORG RITUAL OBJECT. PROBABLY REPRESENTS A GOD OR GODDESS OF FERTILITY.
HMMMM – VERY INTERESTING, I'M SURE, PERIC.


WITH THE DEPARTURE OF THE IMPERIAL PARTY, THE GENERAL PUBLIC SWARMED TO VIEW THE EXHIBITS. STRANGELY, THE CURIOUS FIGURE IN ITS ENCLOSING BLOCK OF TRANSPARENT MATERIAL ATTRACTED AN UNWANTED AMOUNT OF SOMEWHAT MORBID FASCINATION.
WHAT IS IT, THEN?
VERY ANCIENT – PRE-VORG.
I THINK IT'S A GHOST?
THERE AREN'T SUCH THINGS!

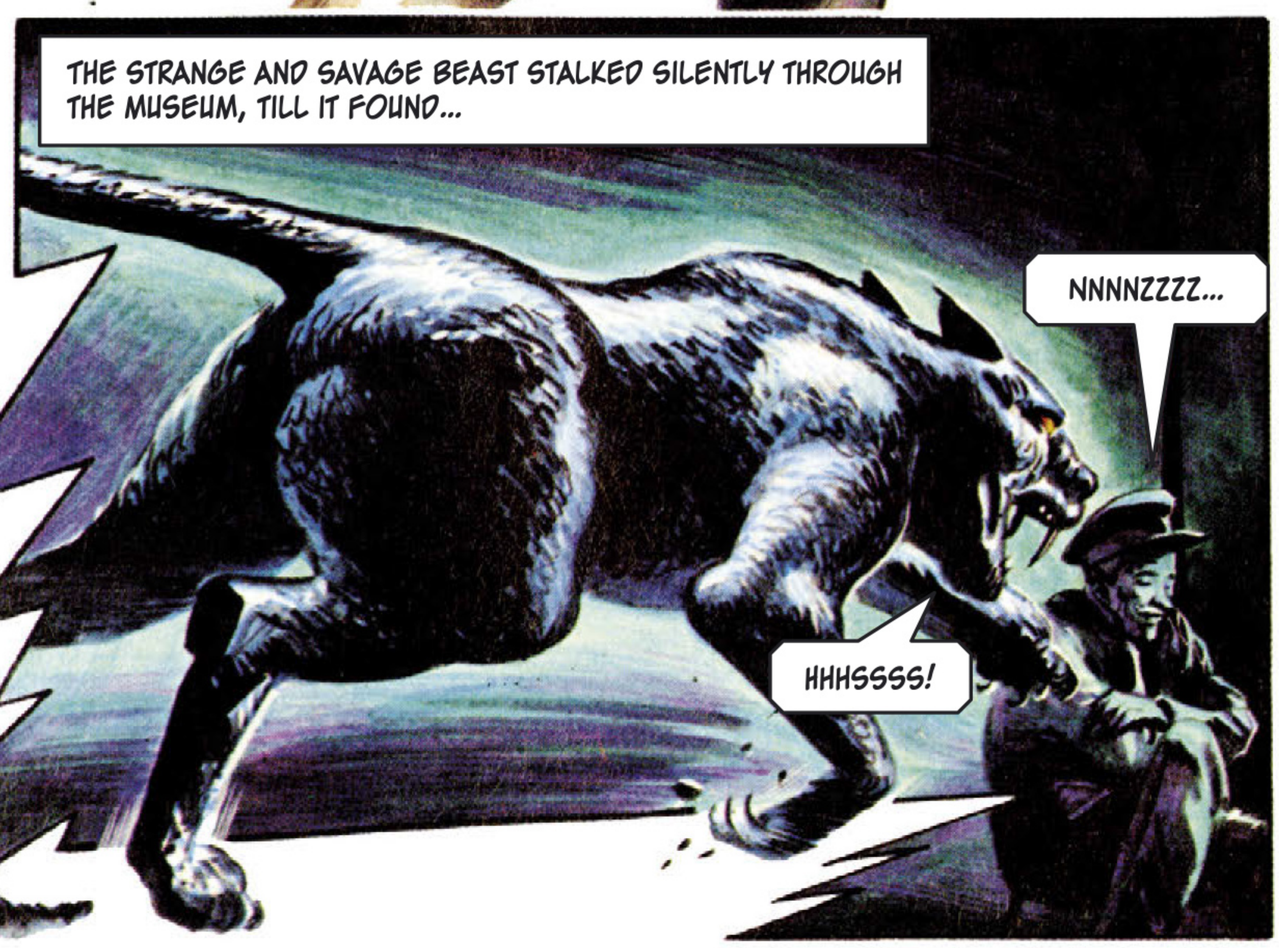

WELL, ALL I CAN SAY IS, I DON'T LIKE IT.
IT'S VERY CULTURAL.
NO YOU DIDN'T – YOU'RE JUST SHOWING OFF!
I SAW IT MOVE JUST THEN!


CAME NIGHTFALL, AND TO THE RELIEF OF THE MUSEUM STAFF, THE MASSED PUBLIC WERE SHOWN OUT OF THE GREAT BUILDING.
NEVER BEEN SO GLAD IN MY LIFE TO SEE THE END OF THE DAY.
BE A REAL PLEASURE TO SIT DOWN AND REST ONE'S FEET.

TOWARDS MIDNIGHT, A STRANGE MANIFESTATION TOOK PLACE IN THE SILENT MUSEUM.

FREED OF ITS COVERING, THE FIGURE STEPPED FORTH –
HHHHSSS!
SO, BALGAR – WE HAVE RETURNED TO THE WORLD OF LIVING THINGS!

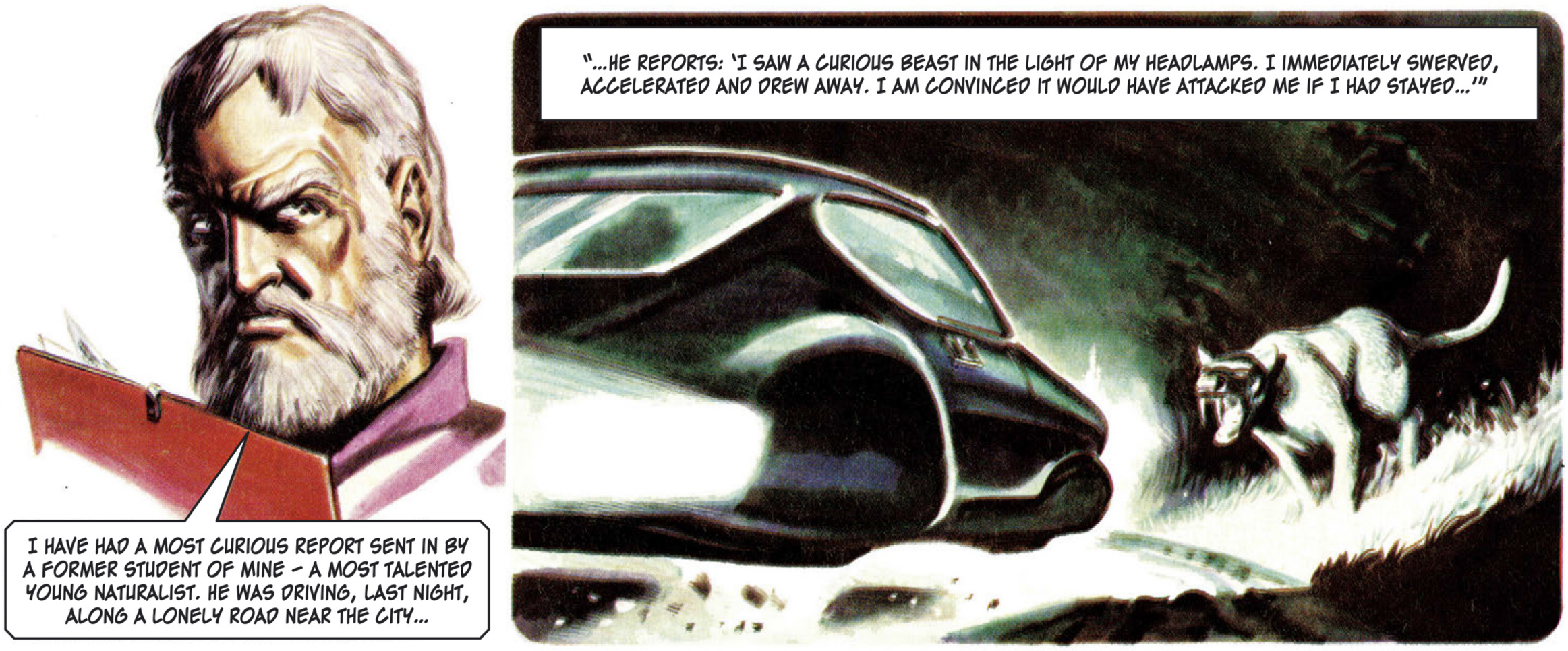
I NEED FOOD, BALGAR. GO AND KILL – AND BRING BACK FRESH MEAT!
HHHHSSS!

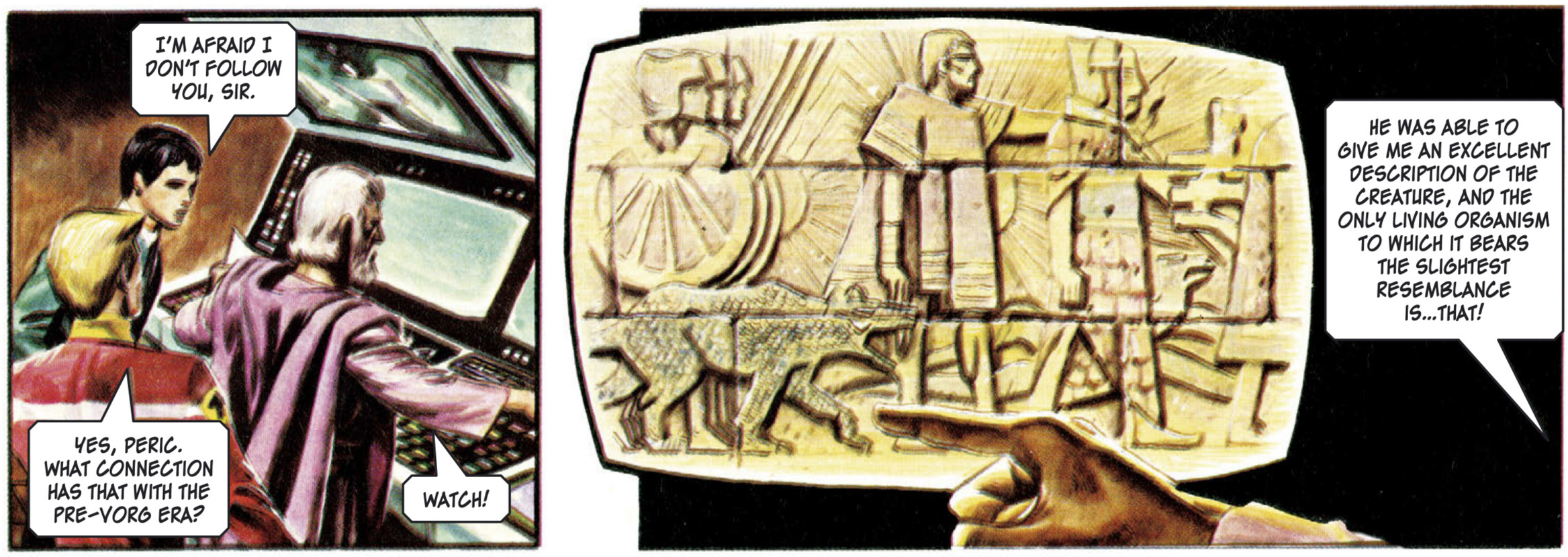

THE STRANGE AND SAVAGE BEAST STALKED SILENTLY THROUGH THE MUSEUM, TILL IT FOUND...
NNNNZZZZ...
HHHSSSS!

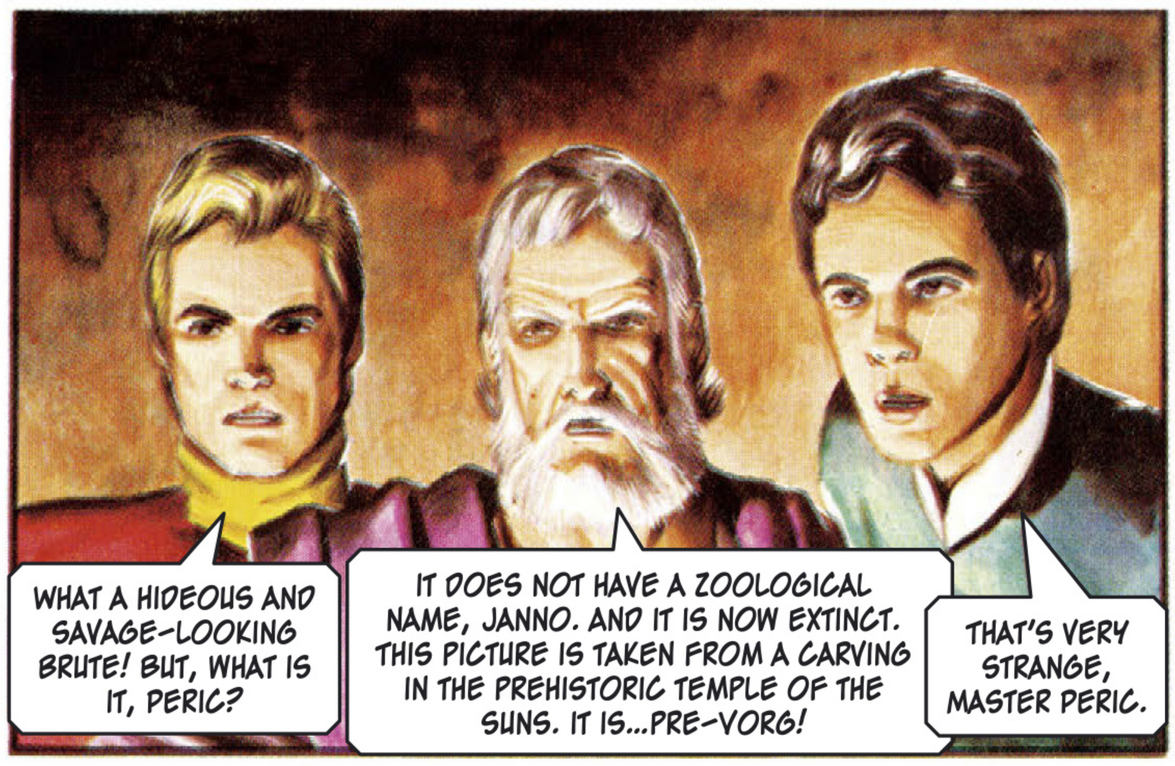
OUTSIDE THE TRIGAN CITY BANK, SHORTLY BEFORE DAWN...
A HISSED COMMAND TO THE FEARSOME CREATURE THAT CROUCHED BY ITS MASTER'S SIDE.
KEEP GUARD, BALGAR. KILL ANY INTRUDERS.
WITH ONE HAND, HE WRENCHED OUT THE ARMOURED LOCK OF THE BANK DOOR.
OLIVER FREY
AND DESTROYED THE HIGH-TENSION ALARM SYSTEM, WITHOUT COMING TO ANY HARM!
IN THE SPACE OF A HUNDRED BREATHS, THE INTRUDER WAS RIFLING A SAFE.
SUFFICIENT MONEY FOR MY MODEST NEEDS!
AND THEN...
AND NOW BALGAR, YOU MUST MAKE YOURSELF SCARCE. LISTEN FOR ME AT ALL TIMES, IN CASE I SUMMON YOU. UNDERSTOOD?
THEY PARTED COMPANY.

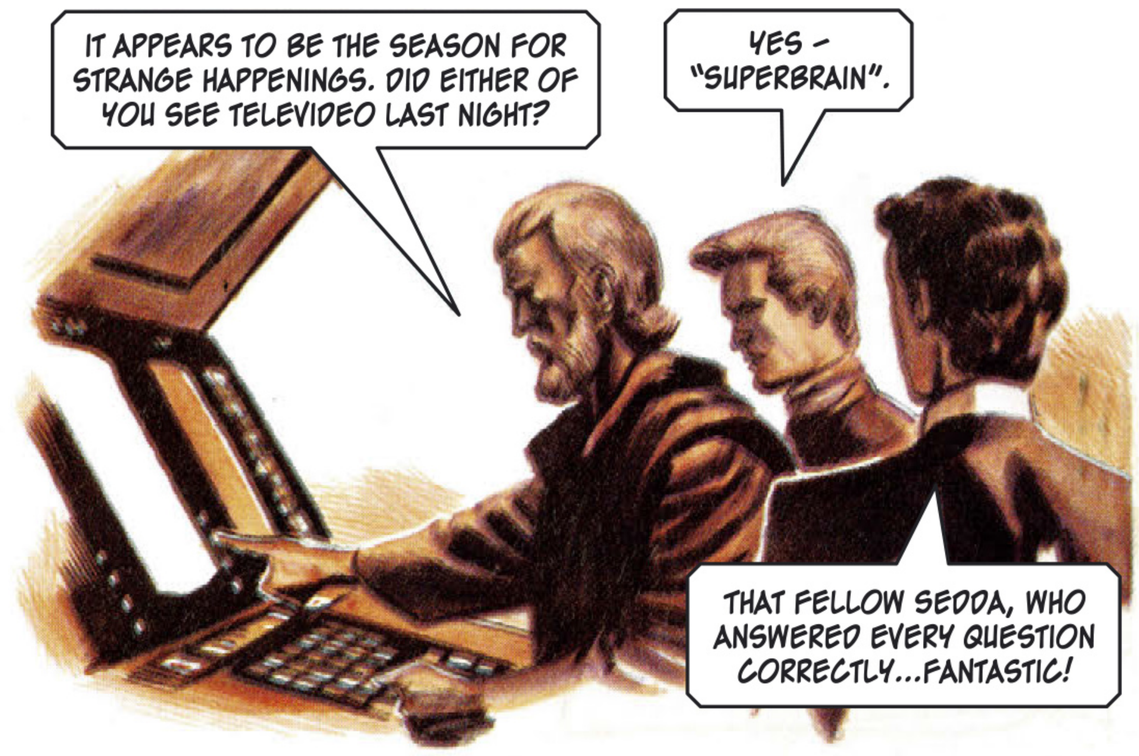
NEXT MORNING, IN THE OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF THE TRIGAN CITY POLICE...
THE BANK YOU SAY?
BROKE OPEN THE FRONT DOOR!
MUST HAVE BEEN A BIG GANG.
THEY SHORT-CIRCUITED THE ALARM SYSTEM!
TOOK FIFTY MILLION ZERSTS IN USED NOTES OF SMALL DENOMINATIONS.
SOMEONE BROKE INTO THE MUSEUM LAST NIGHT. STOLE AN EXHIBIT. AND THE NIGHT WATCHMAN'S MISSING.
WHAT EXHIBIT?
SOME KIND OF RITUAL OBJECT. PRE-VORG. THE MUSEUM AUTHORITIES DON'T RATE IT VERY HIGHLY.
THEN DON'T TROUBLE ME WITH TRIFLES, DEAL WITH IT YOURSELF, SERGEANT ZIMMA!
THE MOST POPULAR LIVE PROGRAMME ON TRIGAN TELEVIDEO WAS "SUPERBRAIN"...
...PRESENTING THIS WEEK'S EDITION OF "SUPERBRAIN" – THE PROGRAMME THAT SEEKS TO FIND THE PERSON WITH THE HIGHEST BRAIN-POWER ON ELEKTON...
AND THE FIRST COMPETITOR THIS WEEK IS...
MY NAME IS NOV SEDDA. I AM OF INDEPENDENT MEANS. AND I WILL ANSWER QUESTIONS ON ANY SUBJECT UNDER THE SUN!
A SIMPLE ONE TO START YOU OFF – WHAT IS THE CUBE ROOT OF 874545.61?
95.63!
HIGH ABOVE, THROUGH A SKYLIGHT, THE THING CALLED BALGAR STARED DOWN AT ITS MASTER IN THE STUDIO.
HHHHSSSS!

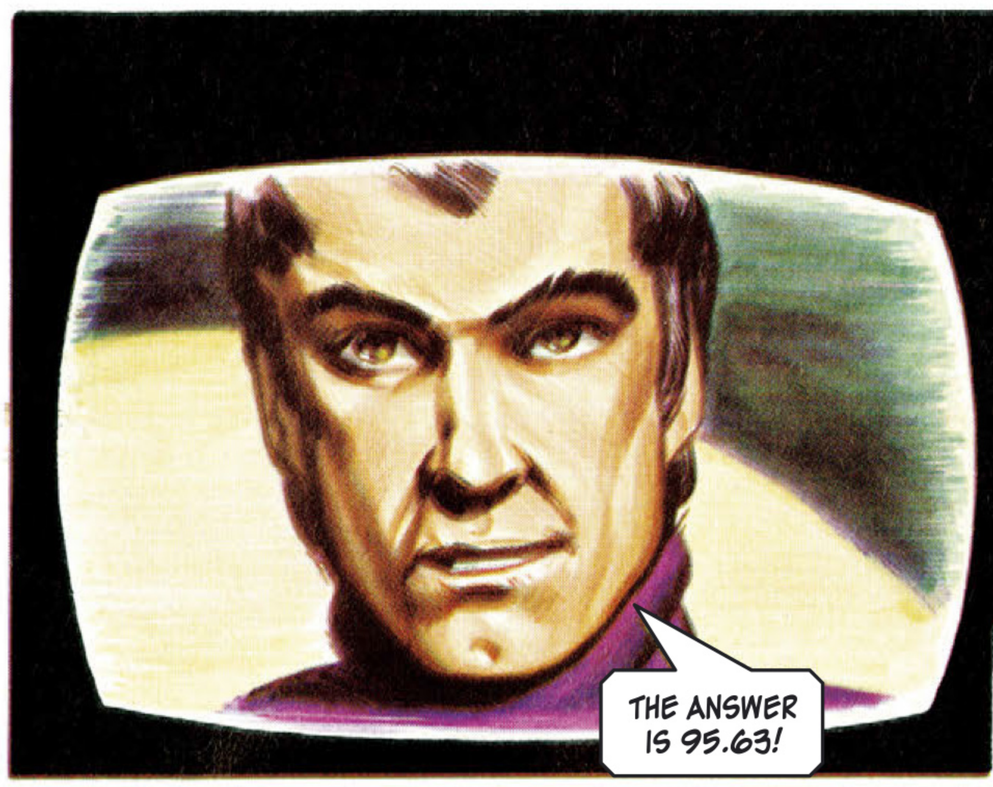
JANNO WAS WITH HIS OLD FRIEND, PERIC, THE GREAT SCIENTIST, WHEN THERE WAS A CALLER.
YES, GRILLO, WHAT IS IT? I'M IN THE MIDDLE OF AN EXPERIMENT.
YOUR PARDON, MASTER PERIC, BUT A SERGEANT ZIMMA OF THE CITY POLICE WISHES TO SPEAK TO YOU.
PERIC GAVE THE YOUNG OFFICER A COURTEOUS RECEPTION.
IT'S CONCERNING THE THEFT OF THE PRE-VORG EXHIBIT FROM THE MUSEUM. MASTER PERIC. CAN YOU TELL ME MORE ABOUT THIS EXHIBIT, SIR?
I AM AFRAID I CANNOT, SERGEANT. BUT SPEAKING OF THE PRE-VORG ERA...

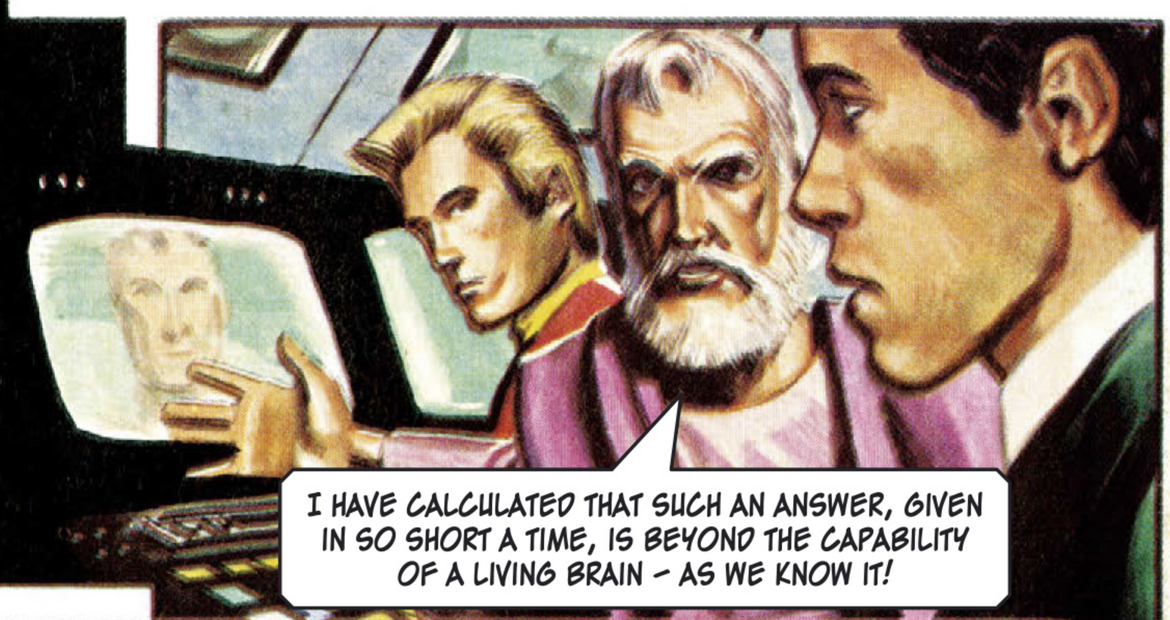

"...HE REPORTS: 'I SAW A CURIOUS BEAST IN THE LIGHT OF MY HEADLAMPS. I IMMEDIATELY SWERVED, ACCELERATED AND DREW AWAY. I AM CONVINCED IT WOULD HAVE ATTACKED ME IF I HAD STAYED...'"
I HAVE HAD A MOST CURIOUS REPORT SENT IN BY A FORMER STUDENT OF MINE – A MOST TALENTED YOUNG NATURALIST. HE WAS DRIVING, LAST NIGHT, ALONG A LONELY ROAD NEAR THE CITY...


I'M AFRAID I DON'T FOLLOW YOU, SIR.
YES, PERIC. WHAT CONNECTION HAS THAT WITH THE PRE-VORG ERA?
WATCH!
HE WAS ABLE TO GIVE ME AN EXCELLENT DESCRIPTION OF THE CREATURE, AND THE ONLY LIVING ORGANISM TO WHICH IT BEARS THE SLIGHTEST RESEMBLANCE IS...THAT!

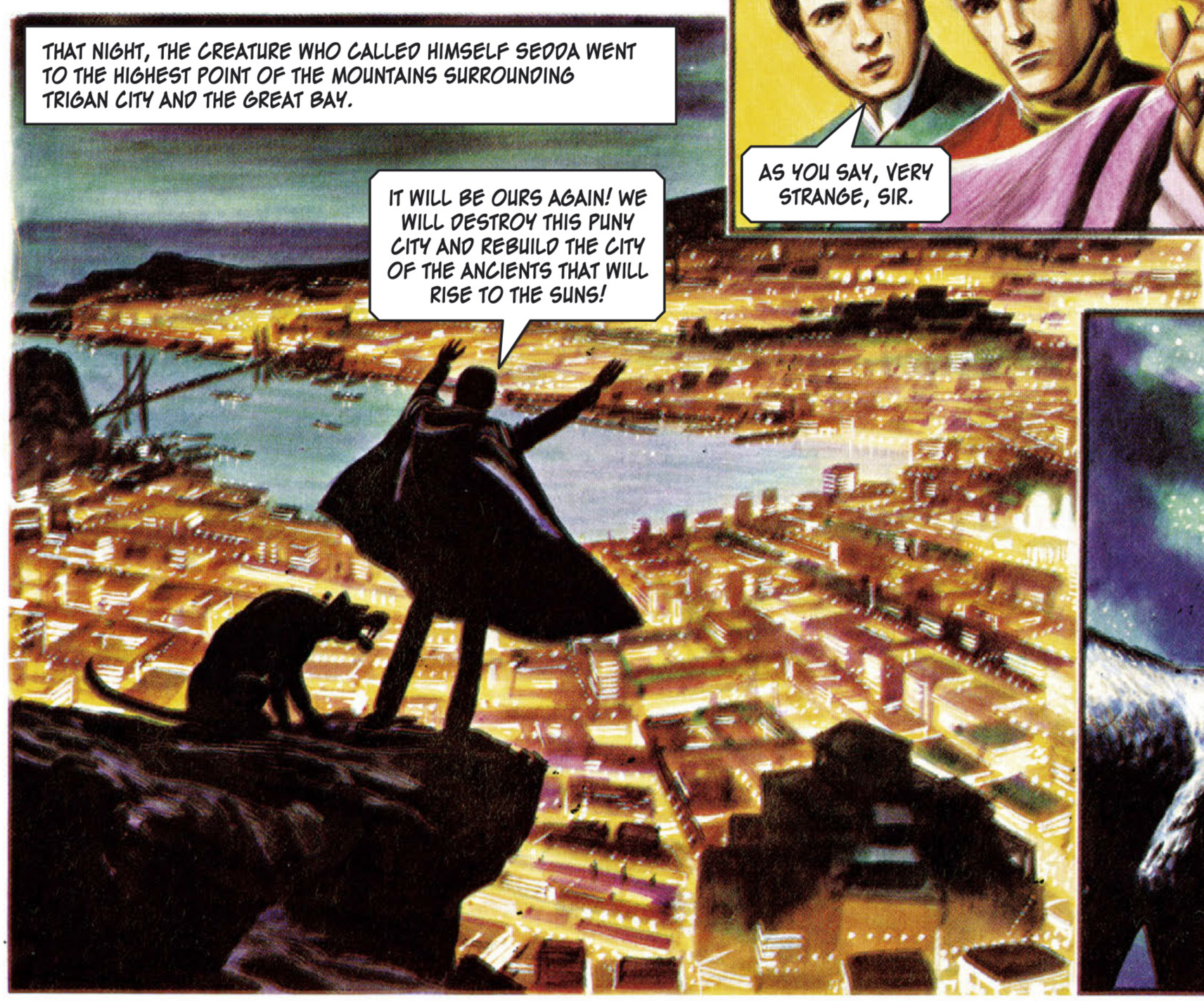




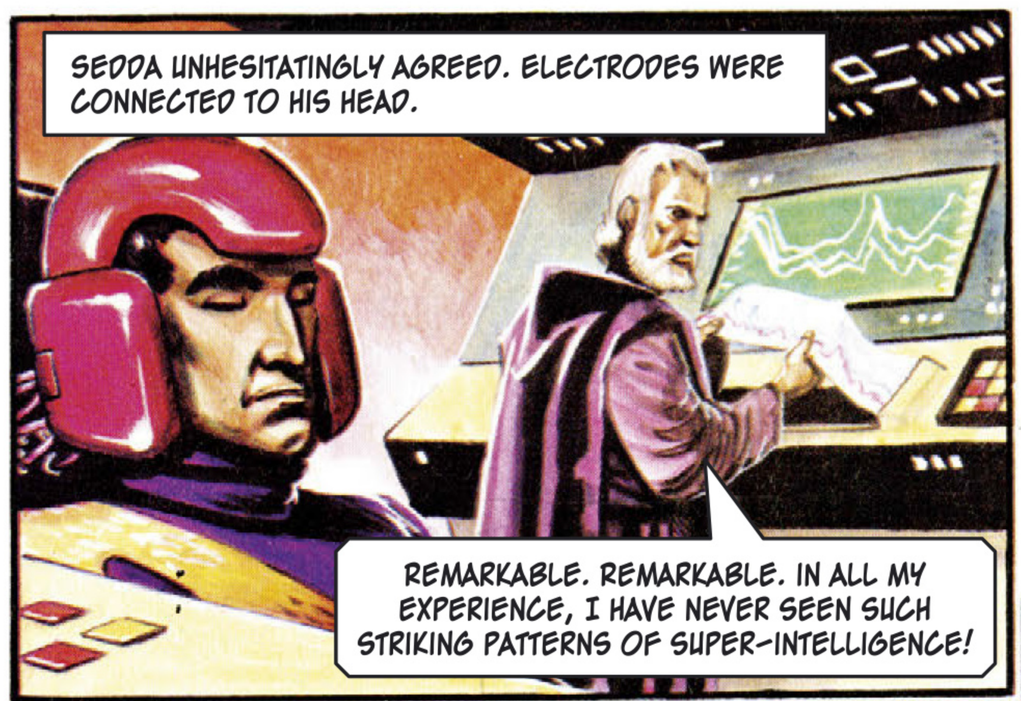


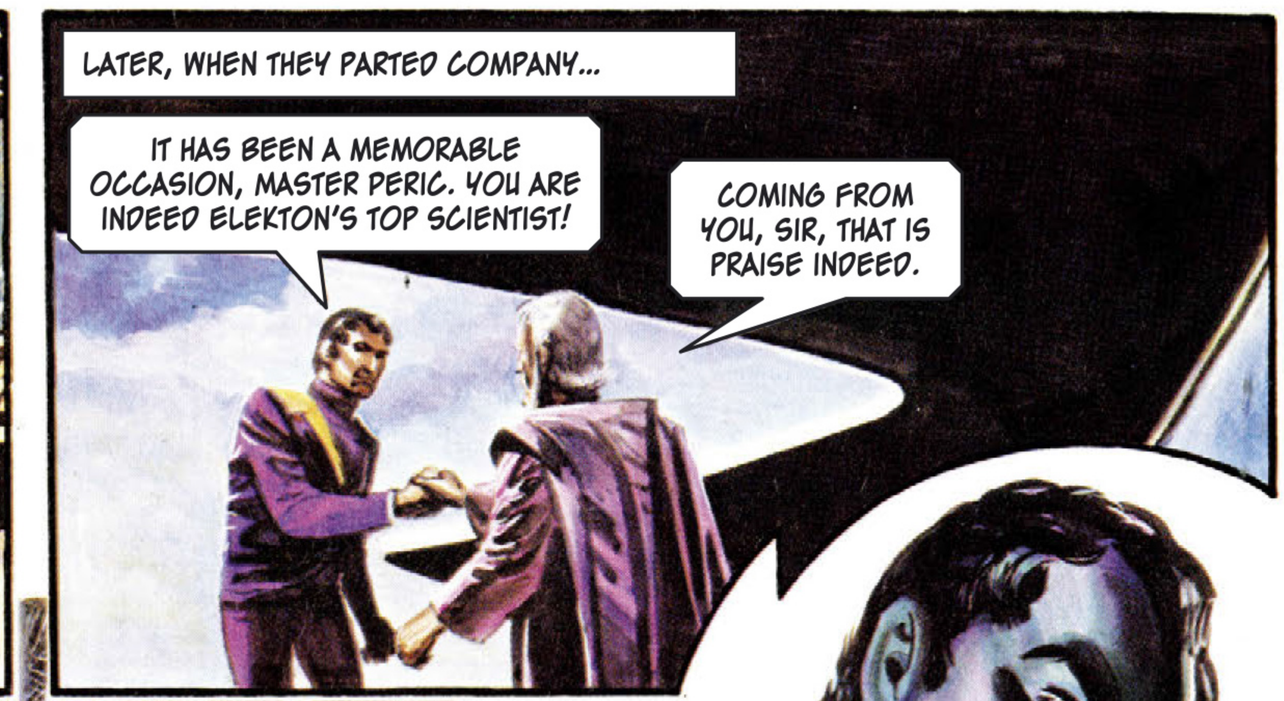


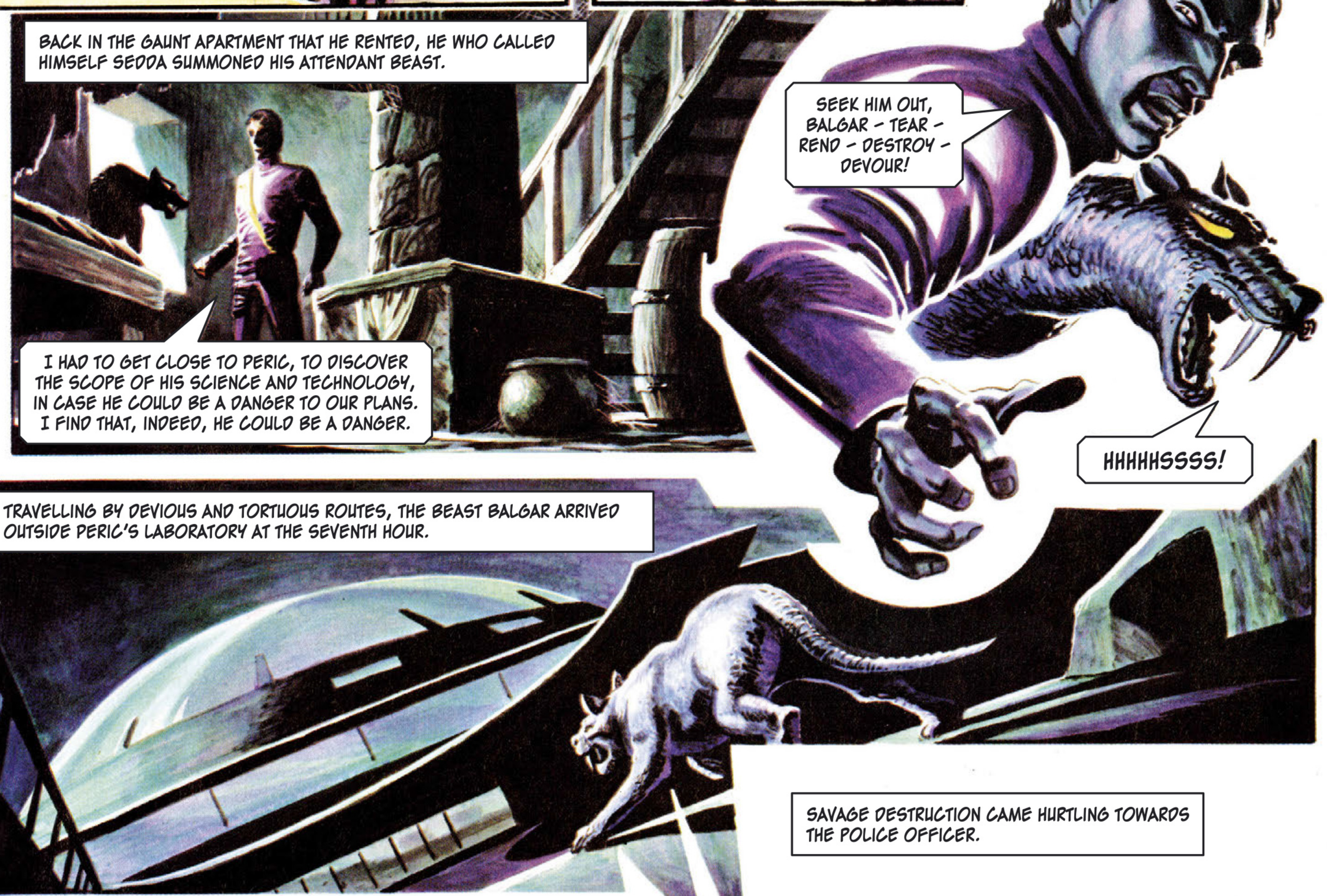
A TOUCH OF A SWITCH BROUGHT A RE-PLAY OF THE PREVIOUS NIGHT'S PROGRAMME ON THE SCREEN...



IT WAS ESTIMATED THAT TEN MILLION TRIGANS LOOKED IN AT THE FOLLOWING WEEK'S EDITION OF "SUPERBRAIN", TO SEE AND HEAR THE FABULOUS SEDDA GIVE ALL THE ANSWERS.
THE ANSWER IS 265876000.5643771
CORRECT!
SEDDA WINS – BEHOLD THE HIGHEST BRAIN-POWER ON ELEKTON!
THE SHOW OVER, A MESSENGER ENTERED THE STUDIO.
FOR YOU, MASTER. FROM PERIC.
FROM PERIC?
THE SUMMONS FROM ELEKTON'S TOP SCIENTIST WAS BRIEF – BUT FLATTERING. IT GAVE SEDDA A THRILL OF TRIUMPH.
'MAY I HAVE THE HONOUR OF MEETING YOU? MIGHT I SUGGEST MY LABORATORY WOULD BE SUITABLE? SHALL WE SAY THE FOURTH HOUR TOMORROW? – PERIC'
MY PLAN HAS SUCCEEDED! PERIC HAS NOTICED ME, AND NOW I SHALL HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO ESTIMATE HIS CAPABILITIES.
OLIVER FREY
THE FOLLOWING DAY, PERIC HAD A TELEVID CALL FROM THE YOUNG POLICE SERGEANT ZIMMA.
MASTER PERIC, I MUST SEE YOU IMMEDIATELY! I THINK I'M ON TO SOMETHING CONCERNING THE MISSING PRE-VORG EXHIBIT.
I AM EXPECTING A VISITOR, SERGEANT. COME THIS EVENING, AT THE SEVENTH HOUR.
A FEW MOMENTS LATER PERIC'S VISITOR WAS ANNOUNCED.
MASTER PERIC, THIS IS INDEED AN HONOUR.
THE HONOUR IS MINE, SIR, TO MEET THE HIGHEST BRAIN-POWER ON THE PLANET.
THE NEWCOMER SHOWED GREAT INTEREST IN PERIC'S FABULOUS EQUIPMENT.
YOUR SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY ARE UNBELIEVABLY ADVANCED, SIR.
YOU ARE TOO KIND. AND NOW, IF YOU WILL PERMIT ME, I SHOULD LIKE TO TRACE THE THOUGHT-PATTERNS OF YOUR STUPENDOUS BRAIN. A MATTER OF GREAT INTEREST TO ME.

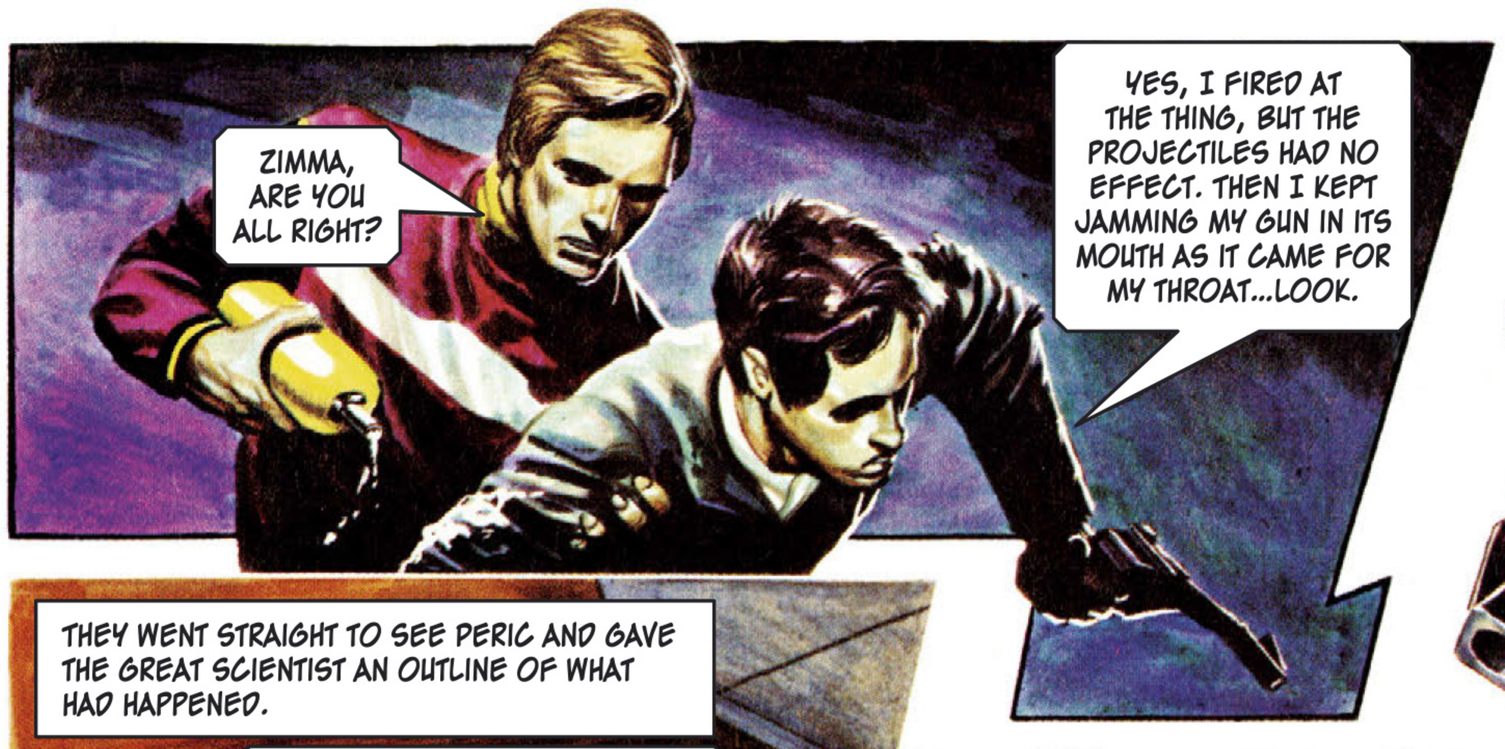

SEDDA UNHESITATINGLY AGREED. ELECTRODES WERE CONNECTED TO HIS HEAD.
REMARKABLE. REMARKABLE. IN ALL MY EXPERIENCE, I HAVE NEVER SEEN SUCH STRIKING PATTERNS OF SUPER-INTELLIGENCE!


LATER, WHEN THEY PARTED COMPANY...
IT HAS BEEN A MEMORABLE OCCASION, MASTER PERIC. YOU ARE INDEED ELEKTON'S TOP SCIENTIST!
COMING FROM YOU, SIR, THAT IS PRAISE INDEED.


BACK IN THE GAUNT APARTMENT THAT HE RENTED, HE WHO CALLED HIMSELF SEDDA SUMMONED HIS ATTENDANT BEAST.
I HAD TO GET CLOSE TO PERIC, TO DISCOVER THE SCOPE OF HIS SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY, IN CASE HE COULD BE A DANGER TO OUR PLANS. I FIND THAT, INDEED, HE COULD BE A DANGER.
SEEK HIM OUT, BALGAR - TEAR - REND - DESTROY - DEVOUR!
HHHHHSSSS!
TRAVELLING BY DEVIOUS AND TORTUOUS ROUTES, THE BEAST BALGAR ARRIVED OUTSIDE PERIC'S LABORATORY AT THE SEVENTH HOUR.
SAVAGE DESTRUCTION CAME HURTLING TOWARDS THE POLICE OFFICER.

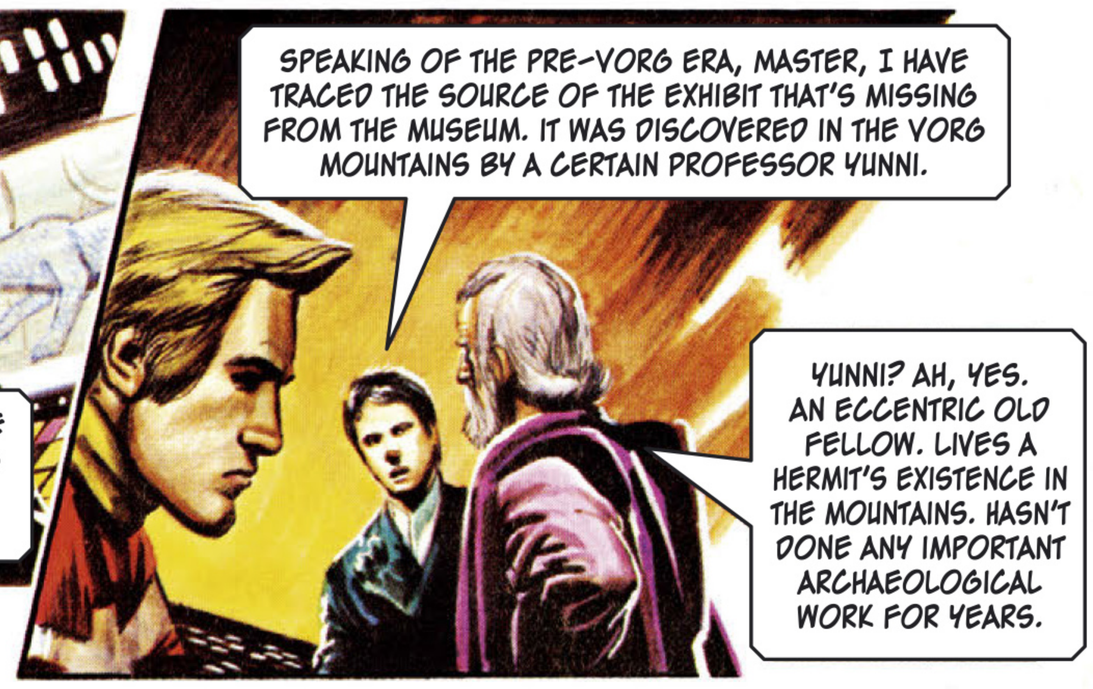
SERGEANT ZIMMA ARRIVED TO KEEP HIS APPOINTMENT WITH THE GREAT SCIENTIST, AND SAW...
BY ALL THE STARS!
HHHSSS!
HAAAAEEEEE!

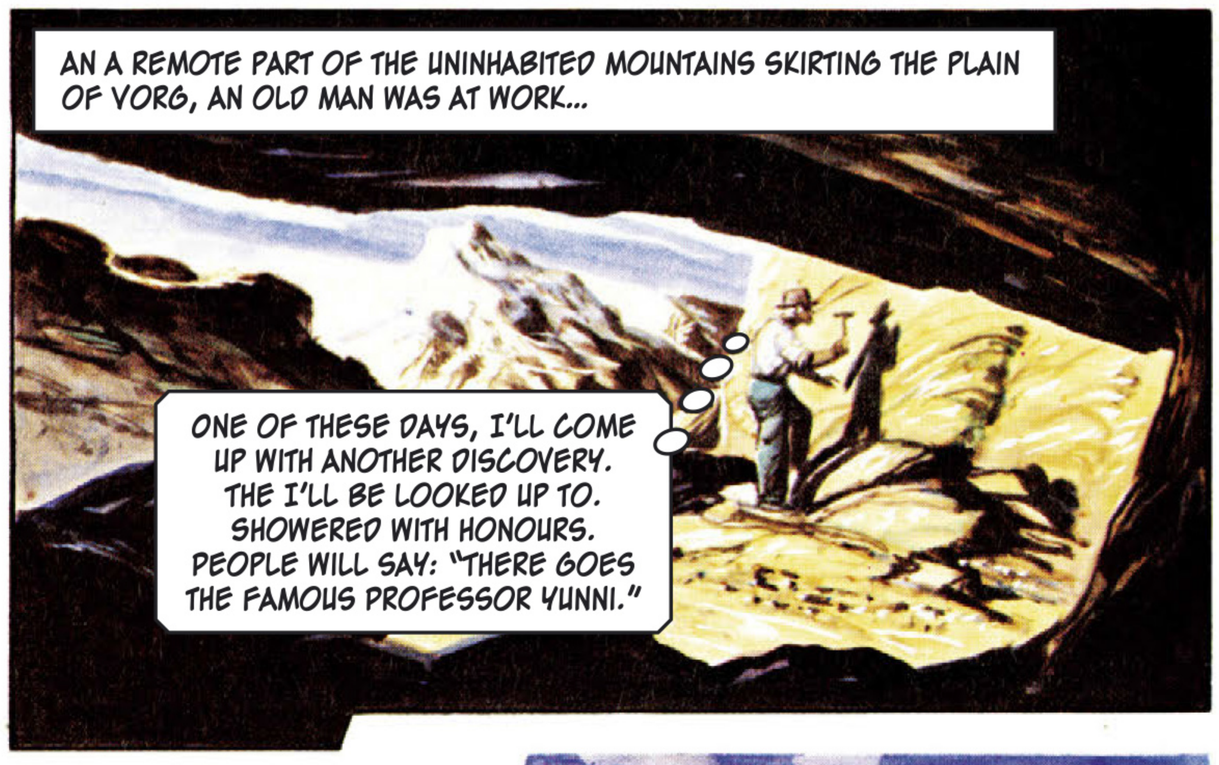
POLICE SERGEANT ZIMMA DREW HIS GUN AND FIRED – THRICE!
NEXT INSTANT...
HAAAAEEE!
OLIVER FREY
AAAAH!
AT THAT MOMENT, JANNO DREW UP IN HIS AUTO OUTSIDE THE LABORATORY. HE TOOK IN THE SCENE...
BY ALL THE STARS – ZIMMA!
HE HAD NO OTHER WEAPON BUT THE AUTO'S FIRE EXTINGUISHER. SEIZING IT, HE RACED TO THE RESCUE.
HHHSSS!
THE EFFECT OF THE FREEZING FOAM UPON THE STRANGE BEAST WAS LITTLE SHORT OF ASTOUNDING. BALGAR DEPARTED WITH A SCREECH OF TERROR.
YEEEEEH!


ZIMMA, ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?
YES, I FIRED AT THE THING, BUT THE PROJECTILES HAD NO EFFECT. THEN I KEPT JAMMING MY GUN IN ITS MOUTH AS IT CAME FOR MY THROAT...LOOK.

LOOK AT THE TEETH MARKS. IF THAT HAD BEEN YOUR THROAT.

THEY WENT STRAIGHT TO SEE PERIC AND GAVE THE GREAT SCIENTIST AN OUTLINE OF WHAT HAD HAPPENED.
AND YOU SAY THAT THE CREATURE RESEMBLED THE ONE THAT WAS SIGHTED BY THE NATURALIST?
YES, MASTER, LIKE THE ONE IN THE PRE-VORG CARVING FROM THE TEMPLE OF THE SUNS.
STRANGE THING, BUT EVERYWHERE I TURN I COME UP AGAINST SOME REFERENCE TO THE PRE-VORG ERA. YOU KNOW, I THINK I'LL GO AND SEE THIS PROFESSOR YUNNI.
I THINK I'LL COME WITH YOU, SERGEANT ZIMMA.

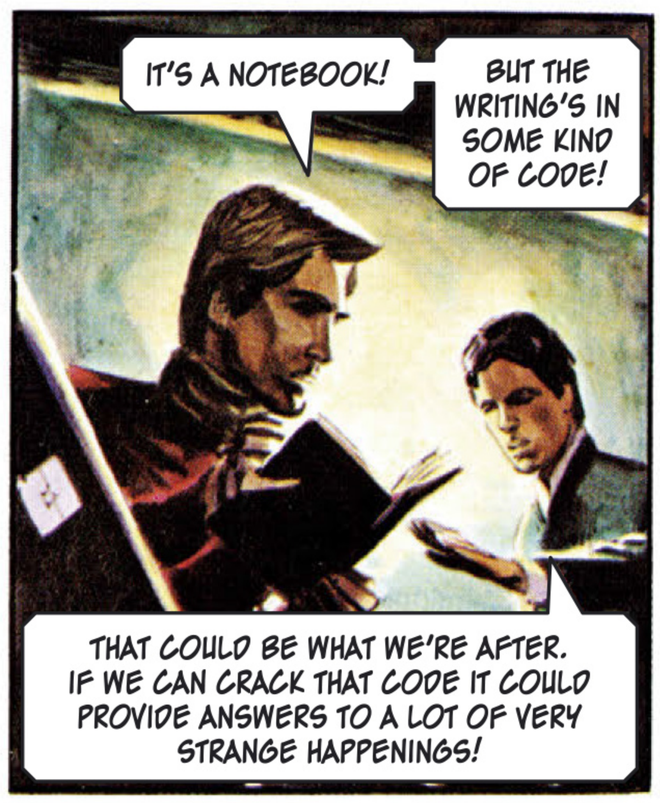

SPEAKING OF THE PRE-VORG ERA, MASTER, I HAVE TRACED THE SOURCE OF THE EXHIBIT THAT'S MISSING FROM THE MUSEUM. IT WAS DISCOVERED IN THE VORG MOUNTAINS BY A CERTAIN PROFESSOR YUNNI.
YUNNI? AH, YES. AN ECCENTRIC OLD FELLOW. LIVES A HERMIT'S EXISTENCE IN THE MOUNTAINS. HASN'T DONE ANY IMPORTANT ARCHAEOLOGICAL WORK FOR YEARS.

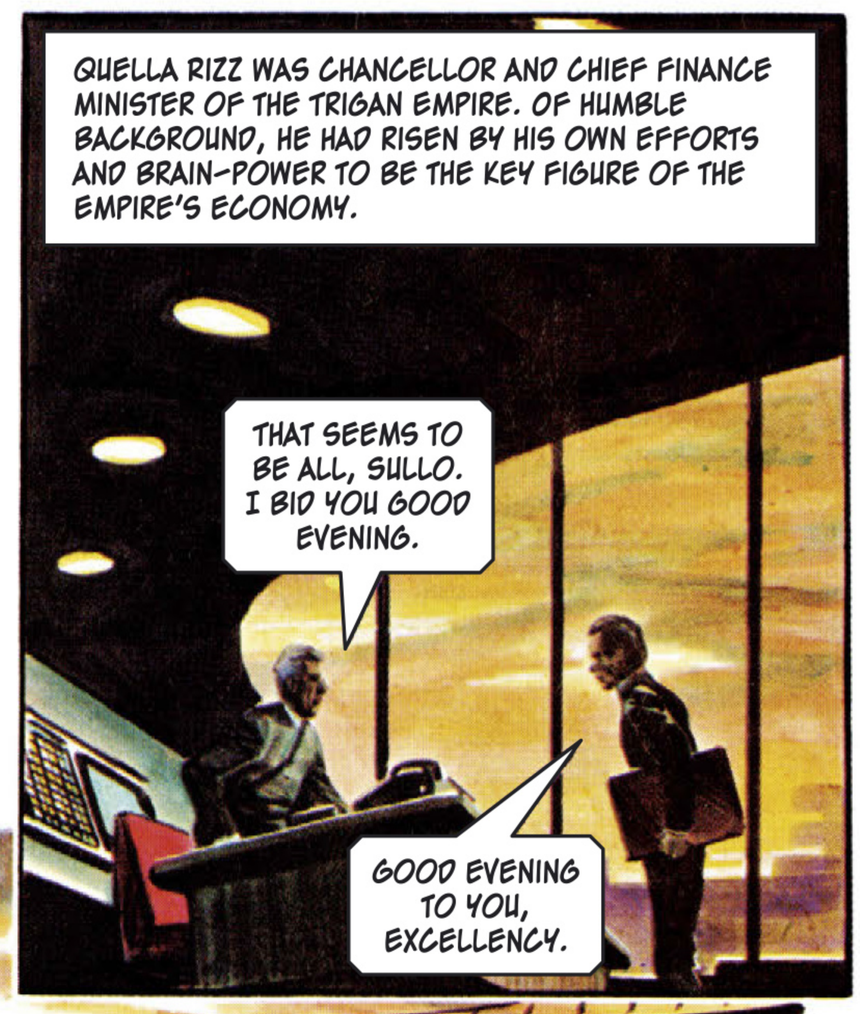

AN A REMOTE PART OF THE UNINHABITED MOUNTAINS SKIRTING THE PLAIN OF VORG, AN OLD MAN WAS AT WORK...
ONE OF THESE DAYS, I'LL COME UP WITH ANOTHER DISCOVERY. THE I'LL BE LOOKED UP TO. SHOWERED WITH HONOURS. PEOPLE WILL SAY: "THERE GOES THE FAMOUS PROFESSOR YUNNI."

SUDDENLY...
WHO - WHO ARE YOU? - AND WHAT DO YOU WANT WITH ME?

SEDDA'S VOICE RASPED OUT IN THE THIN MOUNTAIN AIR...
THIS TIME YOU WILL NOT FAIL, BALGAR!
TEAR! - RENO! - DESTROY! - AND DEVOUR!

FROM A CRAGGY MOUNTAIN CREST, SEDDA AND THE BEAST BALGAR SAW THE ARRIVAL OF TWO OTHERS IN THAT REMOTE AND INHOSPITABLE WILDERNESS.
INTRUDERS, BALGAR!
HHHHSSS!
SEDDA'S SUPER-NORMAL EYESIGHT TOLD HIM ALL...
IT IS JANNO AND THE POLICE OFFICER! BY THE STARS! THEY MUST BE SEEKING PROFESSOR YUNNI – WHICH MEANS THEY ARE GETTING CLOSE TO US! TOO CLOSE!
THEY WILL ALSO HAVE TO BE ELIMINATED, BALGAR. BUT NOT YET – WE HAVE OTHER WORK TO DO THIS DAY!
OLIVER FREY
JANNO AND SERGEANT ZIMMA SEARCHED THE AREA.
NO SIGN OF THE OLD FELLOW.
THAT COULD BE HIS HOME. PERIC DESCRIBED HIM AS AN ECCENTRIC HERMIT.
THEY ENTERED THE TUMBLEDOWN SHACK, AND...
SOMEONE'S BEEN HERE BEFORE US!
SOMEONE WHO WAS LOOKING FOR SOMETHING, I WOULD SAY!
I WONDER IF THEY WERE LOOKING FOR THE SAME THING WE'RE AFTER? – THE PROFESSOR'S RECORD OF WHERE HE DISCOVERED THAT PRE-VORG ITEM.
AND I WONDER IF THEY FOUND IT?





THE MINISTERS GOT INTO HIS LUXURY AUTO AND SET OFF ALONG THE MAIN AUTOWAY IN THE SUBURBS.

TOMORROW, I MUST PREPARE THE TRADE FIGURES TO SHOW TO THE EMPEROR...

PASSING UNDER A BRIDGE – IT HAPPENED!

...DISASTER!!

HAAAEEE!

AAAAAAGH!

NO ORDINARY LIVING THING COULD HAVE EMERGED FROM THAT TANGLED WRECKAGE. BUT BALGAR EMERGED!...

HHHHSSSS...

THE TRAGIC DEMISE OF QUELLA RIZZ LEFT A GAP IN THE TRIGAN GOVERNING HIERARCHY THAT COULD NEVER BE FILLED – OR SO IT SEEMED. AT AN EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF THE IMPERIAL COUNCIL, IT WAS THE SCIENTIST PERIC WHO CAME UP WITH A SURPRISING SUGGESTION...

IMPERIAL MAJESTY, EXCELLENCIES – THERE IS ONLY ONE POSSIBLE CANDIDATE FOR THE VACANT APPOINTMENT OF CHANCELLOR AND CHIEF FINANCE MINISTER – AND THAT IS HE WHO WAS RECENTLY DECLARED TO POSSESS THE HIGHEST BRAIN-POWER ON ELEKTON...

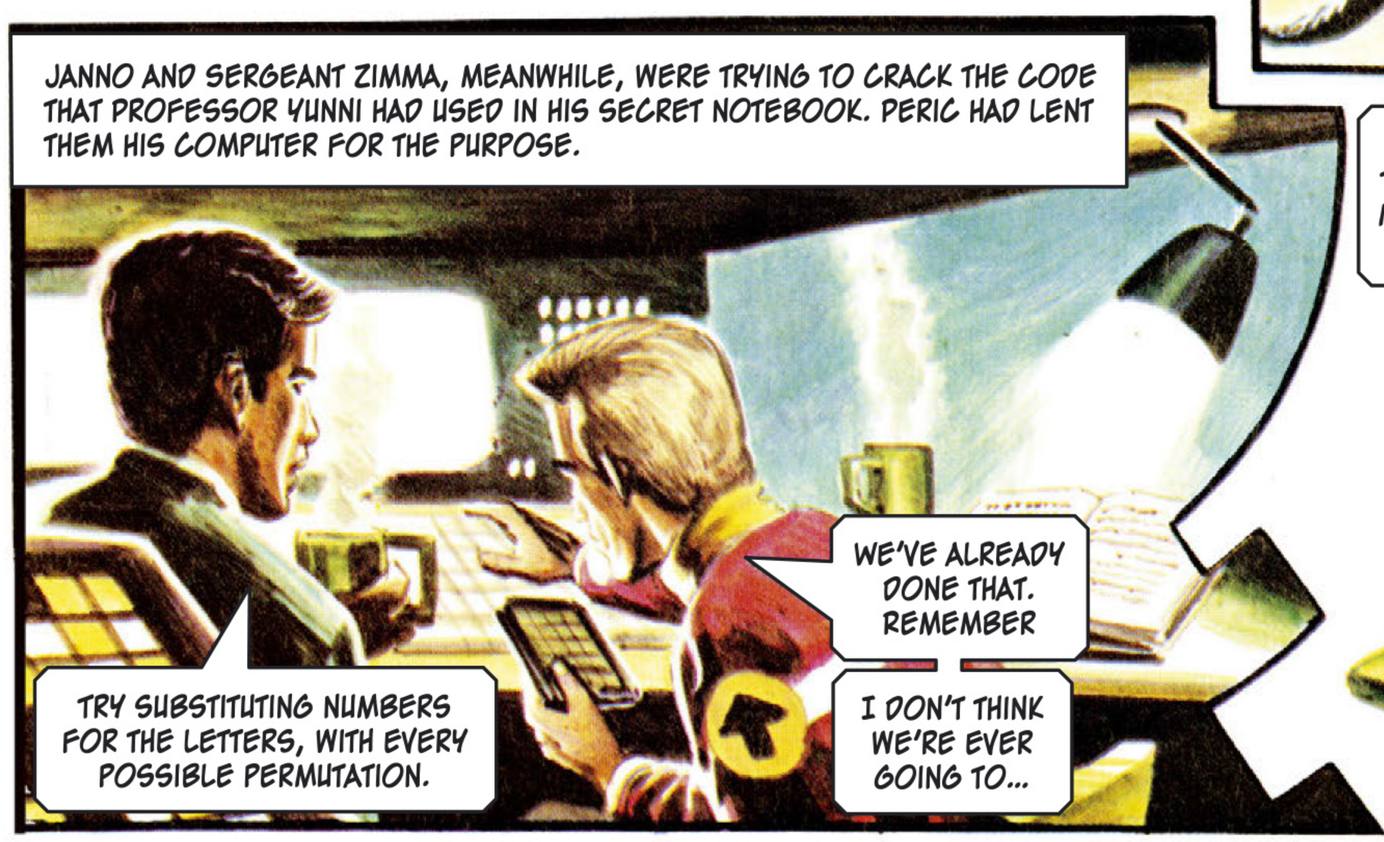
...SEDDA!

THE TRIGAN EMPIRE – AND ALL THE PLANET ELEKTON – WAS ASTONISHED AND INTRIGUED TO HEAR THE NEWS...
IT WAS ANNOUNCED FROM THE IMPERIAL PALACE TODAY THAT THE EMPEROR, ACTING ON THE ADVICE OF HIS COUNCIL, HAS APPOINTED SEDDA TO THE OFFICE OF CHANCELLOR AND CHIEF FINANCE MINISTER – A POST RECENTLY VACATED AT THE TRAGIC DEATH OF QUELLA RIZZ.
OLIVER FREY

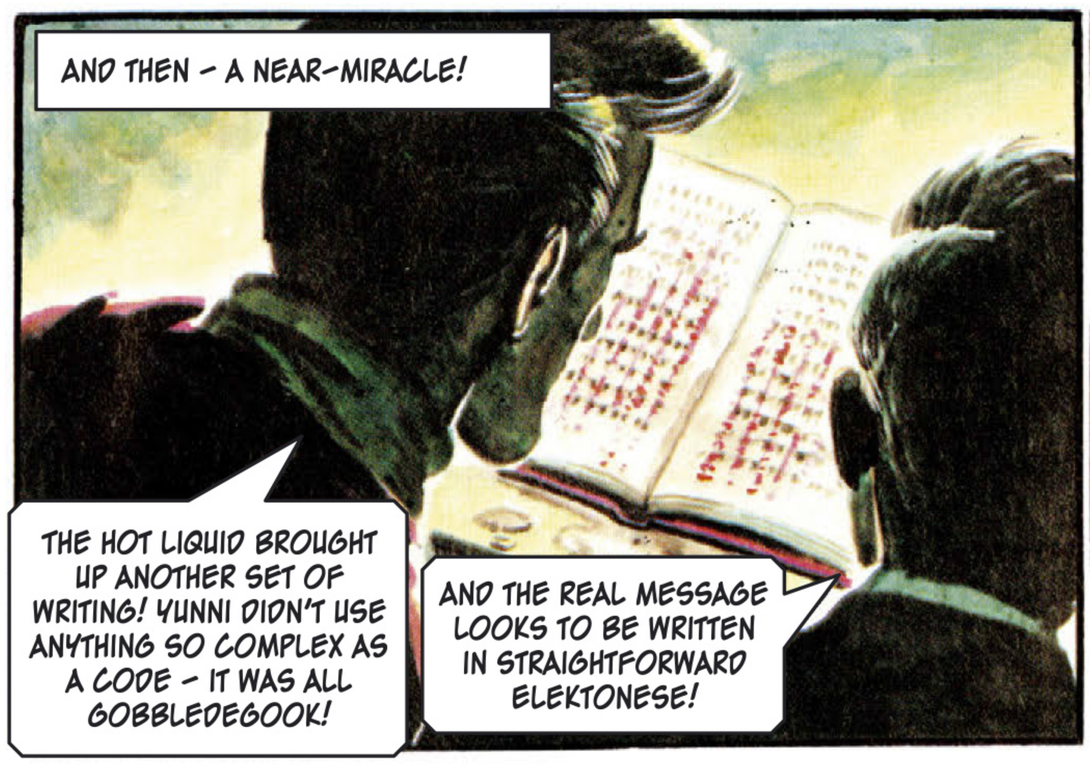
SEDDA AND HIS BEAST WATCHED AND LISTENED WITH SATISFACTION.
SO, BALGAR, OUR PLANS PROGRESS. BY ELIMINATING QUELLA RIZZ AND TAKING HIS PLACE, I AM WELL ABLE TO RUIN THE TRIGAN EMPIRE ECONOMICALLY. THIS WILL BRING UNREST AND REVOLUTION – CIVIL WAR – THE TRIGANS CAN BE RELIED UPON TO DESTROY EACH OTHER, AND ANY NATION THAT TRIES TO INTERVENE...

IT IS THEN THAT WE – THE SUPERFOLK – WILL MOVE IN AND TAKE OVER THE SELF INFLICTED RUINS OF THE TRIGAN EMPIRE AND THE PLANET ELEKTON!

WE WILL SPARE PERIC'S LIFE FOR THE TIME BEING, FOR HE CONTINUES TO BE OF USE TO US. BUT JANNO AND ZIMMA MUST BE ELIMINATED. THEY ARE INVESTIGATING PROFESSOR YUNNI – AND THAT IS DANGEROUSLY NEAR TO OUR SECRET!
HHHHSSS!

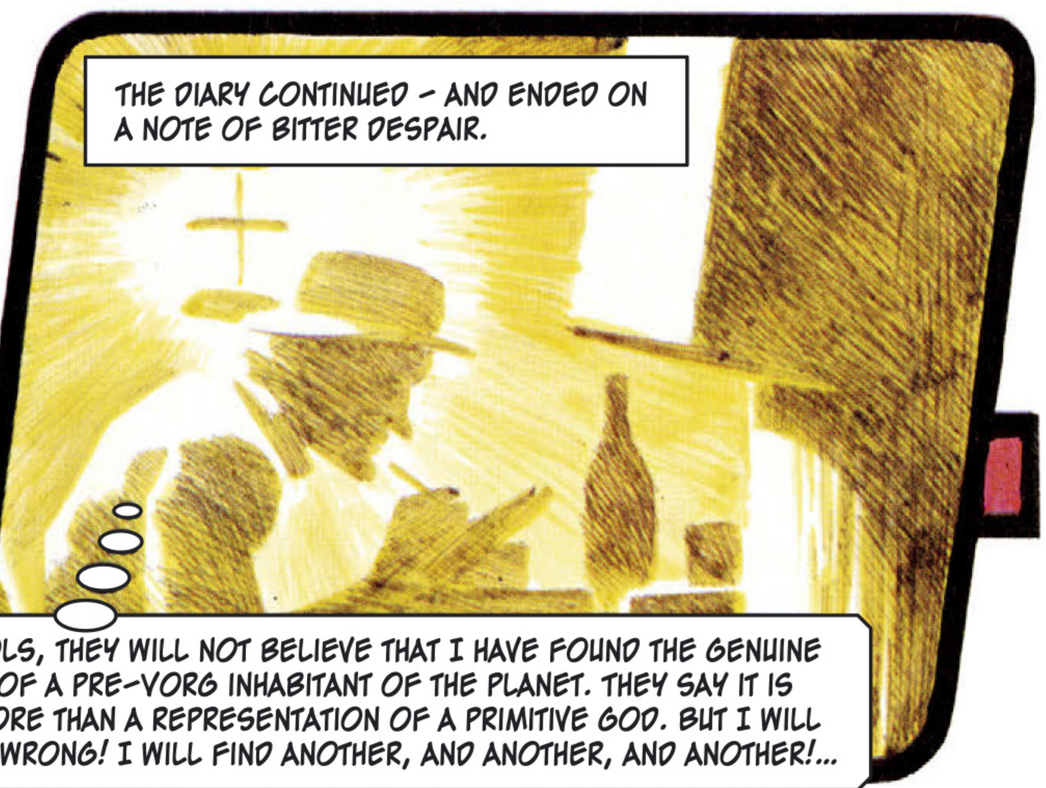

JANNO AND SERGEANT ZIMMA, MEANWHILE, WERE TRYING TO CRACK THE CODE THAT PROFESSOR YUNNI HAD USED IN HIS SECRET NOTEBOOK. PERIC HAD LENT THEM HIS COMPUTER FOR THE PURPOSE.
TRY SUBSTITUTING NUMBERS FOR THE LETTERS, WITH EVERY POSSIBLE PERMUTATION.
WE'VE ALREADY DONE THAT. REMEMBER
I DON'T THINK WE'RE EVER GOING TO...

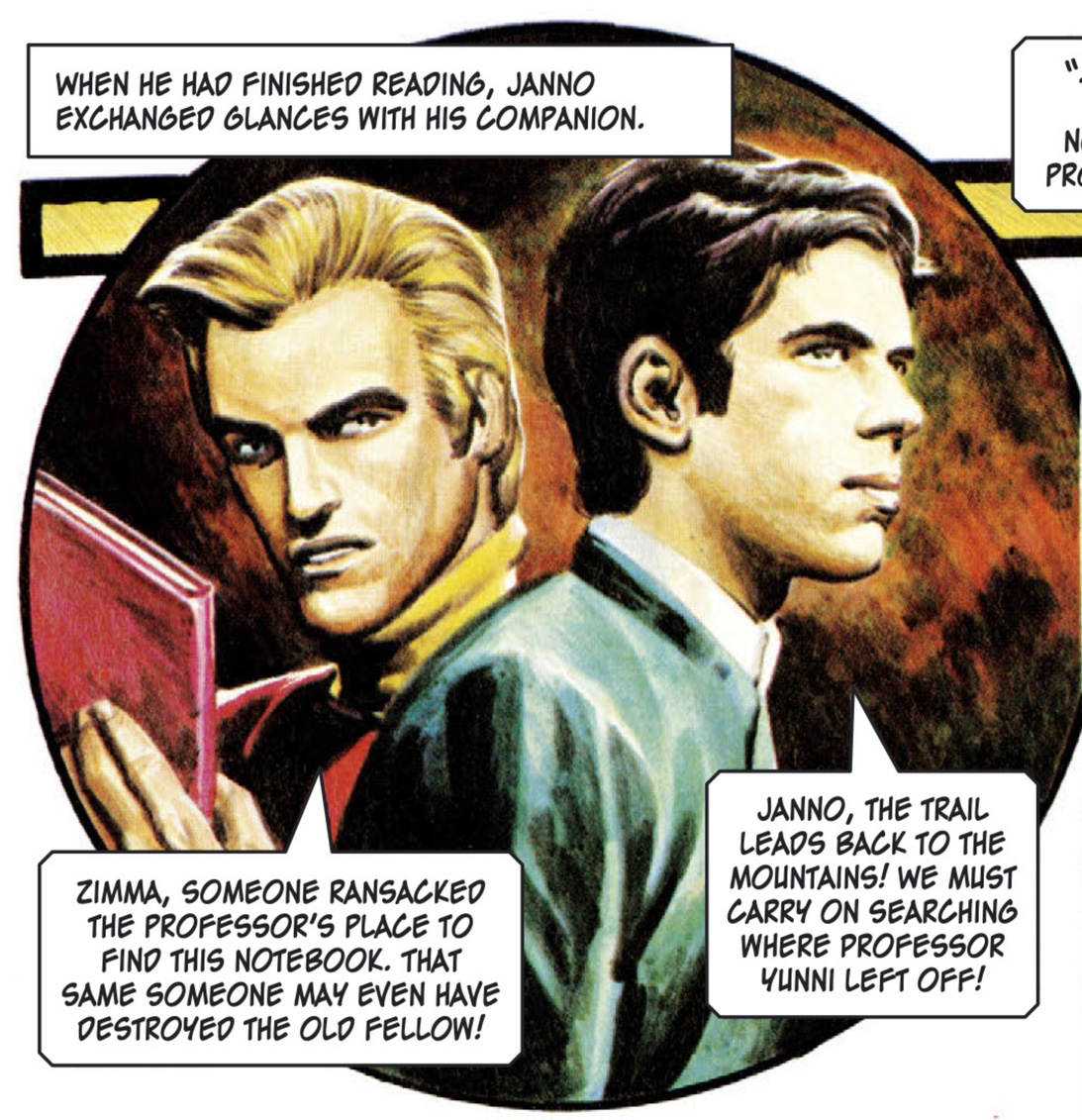
...BREAK THE CODE! THUNDER! I'VE SPILLED MY DRINK ALL OVER THE NOTEBOOK!

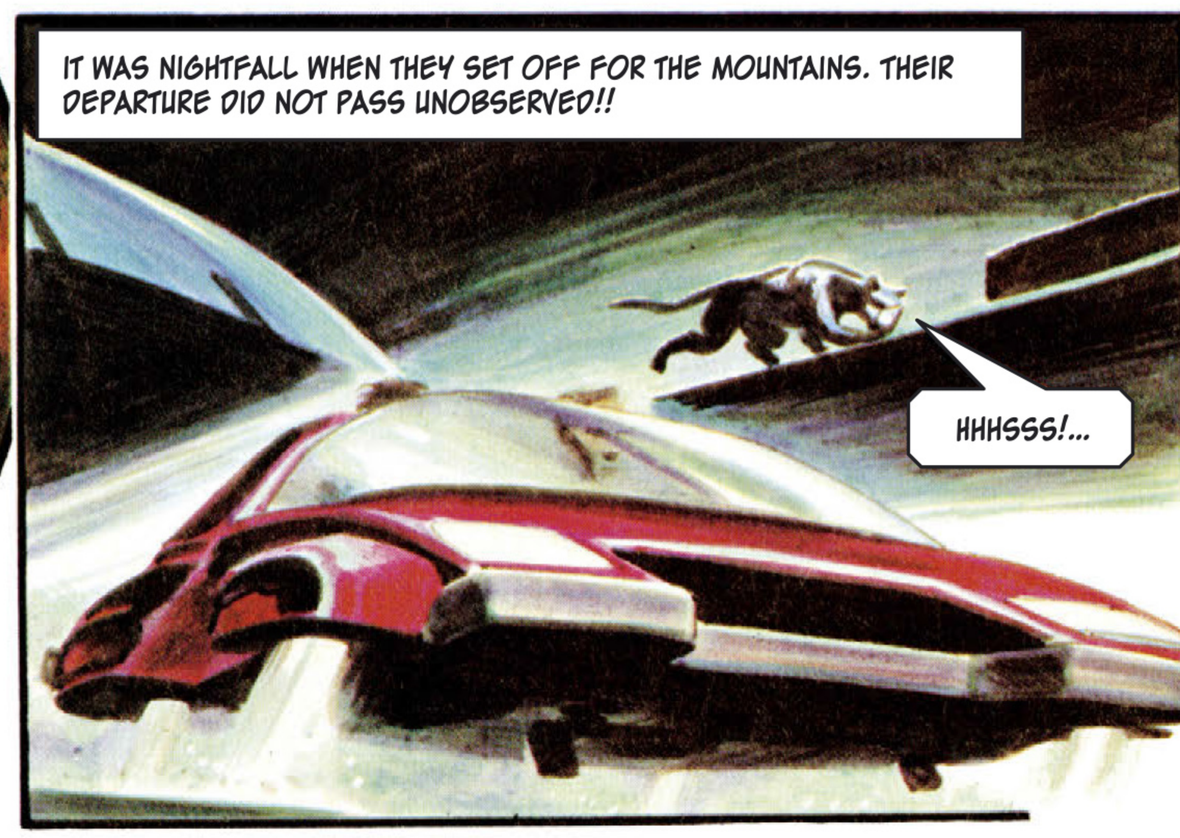

AND THEN – A NEAR-MIRACLE!
THE HOT LIQUID BROUGHT UP ANOTHER SET OF WRITING! YUNNI DIDN'T USE ANYTHING SO COMPLEX AS A CODE – IT WAS ALL GOBBLEDEGOOK!
AND THE REAL MESSAGE LOOKS TO BE WRITTEN IN STRAIGHTFORWARD ELEKTONESE!

THAT'S RIGHT. IT SAYS.... "SHORTLY BEFORE NOON YESTERDAY, I DISCOVERED THE ENTRANCE TO A TOMB ON THE NORTH FACE OF THE PEAK OF VORG, ABOUT SEVEN RILLS FROM THE SUMMIT..."
PROFESSOR YUNNI'S WORDS BROUGHT THE SCENE VIVIDLY TO THEIR IMAGINATIONS..."ENLARGING THE HOLE, I ENTERED THE PLACE OF BURIAL, AND SAW..."
BY ALL THE STARS!

IT IS A BODY ENCASES WITHIN SOME PLASTIC MATERIAL...TWO BODIES!


THE DIARY CONTINUED – AND ENDED ON A NOTE OF BITTER DESPAIR.
"...THE FOOLS, THEY WILL NOT BELIEVE THAT I HAVE FOUND THE GENUINE REMAINS OF A PRE-VORG INHABITANT OF THE PLANET. THEY SAY IT IS NOTHING MORE THAN A REPRESENTATION OF A PRIMITIVE GOD. BUT I WILL PROVE THEM WRONG! I WILL FIND ANOTHER, AND ANOTHER, AND ANOTHER!...


WHEN HE HAD FINISHED READING, JANNO EXCHANGED GLANCES WITH HIS COMPANION.
ZIMMA, SOMEONE RANSACKED THE PROFESSOR'S PLACE TO FIND THIS NOTEBOOK. THAT SAME SOMEONE MAY EVEN HAVE DESTROYED THE OLD FELLOW!
JANNO, THE TRAIL LEADS BACK TO THE MOUNTAINS! WE MUST CARRY ON SEARCHING WHERE PROFESSOR YUNNI LEFT OFF!


IT WAS NIGHTFALL WHEN THEY SET OFF FOR THE MOUNTAINS. THEIR DEPARTURE DID NOT PASS UNOBSERVED!!
HHHSSS!...

JANNO AND ZIMMA SCALED THE NORTH FACE OF THE PEAK OF VORG. SEVEN RILLS FROM THE SUMMIT, THEY SAW...
THAT'S THE TOMB ENTRANCE THAT PROFESSOR YUNNI DISCOVERED ALL THOSE LUNAR YEARS AGO!
THEY ENTERED...
THIS IS IT, ALL RIGHT!
ZIMMA! LOOK AT THIS! THERE'S A BRICK WALL BEHIND THIS PLASTER WORK!
THEY SET TO WORK ON THE WALL – AND FOUND A DARK VOID BEYOND!
IT COULD BE ANOTHER FUNERARY CHAMBER!
WE'LL FIND OUT SOON ENOUGH!
THEY PEERED INTO THE GLOOM – THEIR TORCH REVEALING...
BY ALL THE STARS!
OLIVER FREY

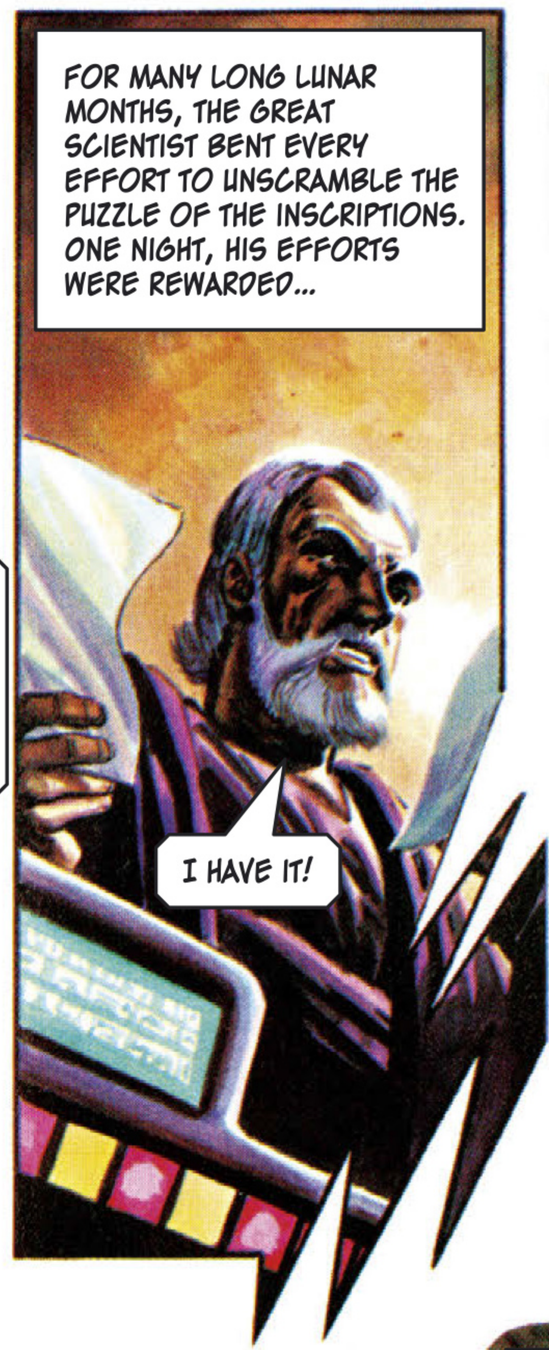
A MASS OF LOOMING SHAPES, SET RANK UPON RANK IN THE GREAT VAULTED SPACE!
SOMETHING ELSE CAUGHT JANNO'S EYE...
ANOTHER OF THOSE HIDEOUS BRUTES LIKE THE ONE THAT NEARLY KILLED US THE OTHER DAY, ZIMMA!
AND...
YES, BUT LOOK AT THAT! DO YOU NOT RECOGNISE HIM?
IT'S SEDDA!...
THE HIGHEST BRAIN-POWER ON THE PLANET!
AND NOW THE CHANCELLOR OF THE TRIGAN EMPIRE!
JANNO, WE'RE ONTO SOMETHING REALLY BIG! WE'VE GOT TO LAY THIS EVIDENCE IN FRONT OF THE ONLY PERSON ON ELEKTON WHO CAN EXPLAIN IT...
TO PERIC! - LET'S GO!
THE PRE-VORG INHABITANTS!
HUNDREDS OF THEM!
THEY DESCENDED THE MOUNTAIN - WHERE A SAVAGE SHAPE WAS CROUCHED IN WAITING FOR THEM!
ZIMMA! - LOOK OUT!
JANNO LUNGED WITH HIS HEAVY EXCAVATING AXE - BUT BALGAR BRUSHED IT ASIDE WITH A SWEEP OF AN ARMOURED CLAW!
ZIMMA! - NO MATTER WHAT, ONE OF US HAS GOT TO REACH PERIC WITH THE INFORMATION!
HHHHSSSS!
WE'LL SPLIT UP - MAYBE IT WON'T GET BOTH OF US!
YOU GO TO THE LEFT, I'LL GO THE OTHER WAY. WHEN I SAY 'GO' - RUN FOR YOUR LIFE!
JANNO SHOUTED THE STARTING WORD - AND RAN!
IT'S CHOSEN ME AS ITS VICTIM!

A TRIGAN CITY POLICE PATROL CRAFT ABOVE THE PLAIN OF VORG...
LOOK! SOMEONE RUNNING – AS IF FOR HIS LIFE.
WE'LL DESCEND TO INVESTIGATE.
WHY! IT'S DETECTIVE-SERGEANT ZIMMA.
OLIVER FREY
PICK ME UP – QUICKLY!
TAKE ME TO PERIC'S LABORATORY. WITH ALL SPEED! THIS IS A MATTER OF LIFE AND DEATH!
PERIC WAS AT WORK WHEN THE POLICE SERGEANT BURST INTO THE LABORATORY.
HELLO, ZIMMA. HOW ARE THE INVESTIGATIONS PROGRESSING?
SUCCESSFULLY. BUT IT'S COST JANNO HIS LIFE.
DEAD?
KILLED! BY THAT SAVAGE BEAST FROM PRE-HISTORY! I LAST SAW HIM RUNNING AWAY FROM THE CREATURE – BUT HE NEVER HAD A HOPE!

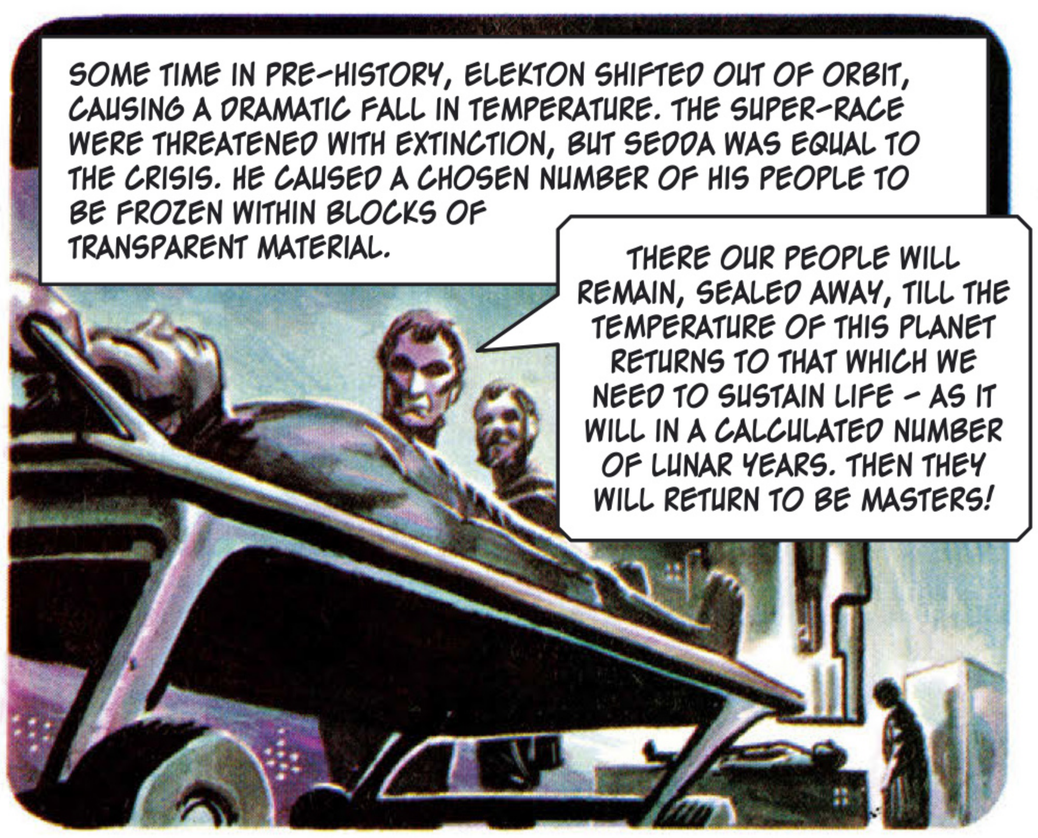
THE DISTRAUGHT ZIMMA THEN WENT ON TO EXPLAIN WHAT THEY HAD DISCOVERED IN THE MOUNTAINS.
YOU SAY YOU FOUND MORE OF THOSE THINGS THAT PROFESSOR YUNNI CLAIMED WERE PRE-VORG INHABITANTS?
HUNDREDS OF THEM. PACKED, RANK UPON RANK. AND THAT ISN'T ALL - WE FOUND A WALL-PAINTING OF THE CREATURE WHO CALLS HIMSELF SEDDA.
I ALWAYS THOUGHT SEDDA WAS NOT OF THIS AGE AND TIME. INDEED, I HAVE GRAVE DOUBTS IF HE IS OF THIS PLANET AT ALL!
AND TO THINK THAT HE NOW CONTROLS THE FINANCIAL DESTINY OF THE TRIGAN EMPIRE.
IN HIS LUXURY OFFICE IN THE FINANCE MINISTRY, SEDDA WAS ARRANGING THE DOWNFALL OF THE TRIGAN EMPIRE!
WITH THE DEALS I HAVE ENGINEERED, THE BANK OF TRIGAN WILL COLLAPSE IN THREE LUNAR MONTHS...
AFTER THAT WILL COME CHAOS - RIOTING - REVOLUTION!
AND THEN...
BALGAR! WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE? YOU HAD MY ORDERS TO KEEP WELL AWAY FROM ME!
THE BEAST WAS FEARSOME NO LONGER, BUT HID LIKE A WHIPPED CUR BEHIND ITS MASTER!
BALGAR, WHAT AILS YOU? WHAT HAS HAPPENED TO YOU?
A SOUND MADE SEDDA TURN...
AAAAAGH! - YOU!
JANNO STOOD ON THE THRESHOLD!
I KNOW ALL ABOUT YOU, SEDDA! THE GAME'S UP!
WITH A SHRIEK OF FURY, SEDDA LAUNCHED HIMSELF AT JANNO.
EEEEEEEGH! I CAN RIP OPEN A BANK VAULT WITH MY BARE HANDS! WHAT WILL I NOT DO WITH YOU?

THE FIRST SLASH OF SEDDA'S OPEN HAND MISSED JANNO'S HEAD AND CARVED A RENT IN THE WALL!
UUUUGH!
OLIVER FREY
NEXT INSTANT, SEDDA WAS ENVELOPED IN FREEZING FOAM FROM JANNO'S FIRE EXTINGUISHER!
EEEE-A-A-A-AAAAAGHHHH!
AH, I SEE YOU DON'T LIKE THAT EITHER, SEDDA!
WHEN PERIC AND ZIMMA ARRIVED ON THE SCENE WITH A COMPANY OF ARMED POLICE, THEY GAPED TO SEE JANNO – BACK FROM THE "DEAD"!
JANNO! YOU'RE ALIVE! BUT – HOW?
JANNO HELD UP – THE FIRE EXTINGUISHER FROM HIS AUTO.
THIS SAVED US ONCE BEFORE, REMEMBER? IT SAVED MY AGAIN WHEN THE BEAST CAME AFTER ME IN THE MOUNTAINS. AND IT IS ALSO THE ANSWER TO SEDDA!
HE POINTED. THE SUPER-CREATURE AND HIS ATTENDANT BEAST WERE NOTHING BUT SHIVERING, SEMI-CONSCIOUS WRECKS!
LOOK AT THEM BOTH!
THE LOWERING OF THEIR BODY TEMPERATURE HAS REDUCED THEM TO HELPLESSNESS!

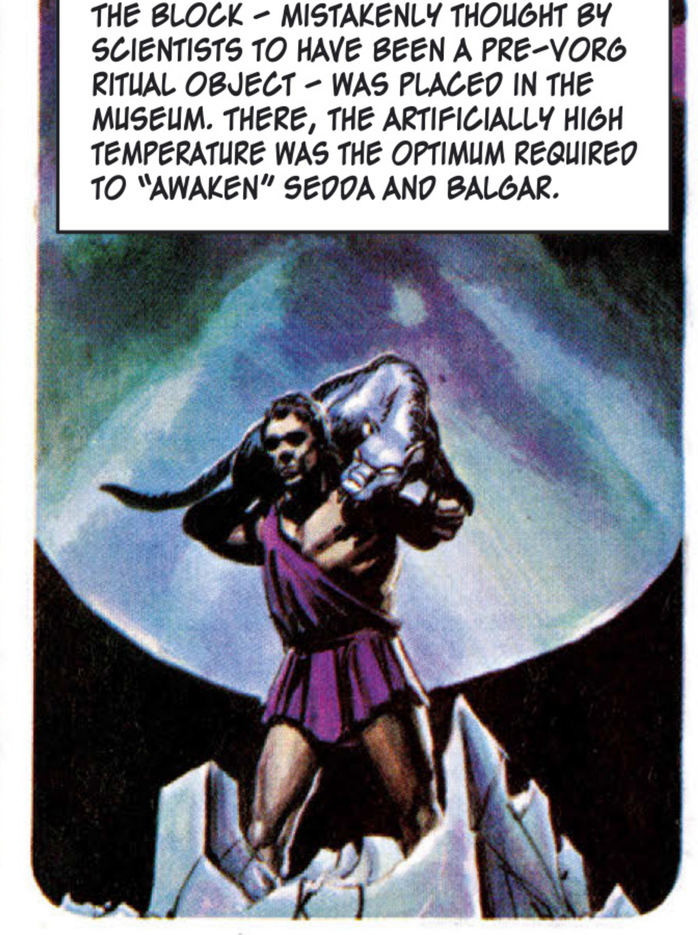
IN DUE COURSE, JANNO AND ZIMMA ESCORTED PERIC TO THE VAST CHAMBER IN THE HEART OF THE MOUNTAIN.
WHO ARE – OR WERE – THESE PEOPLE?
I THINK WE SHALL FIND THE ANSWER IN THESE WALL INSCRIPTIONS – WHEN I HAVE DECIPHERED THEM!

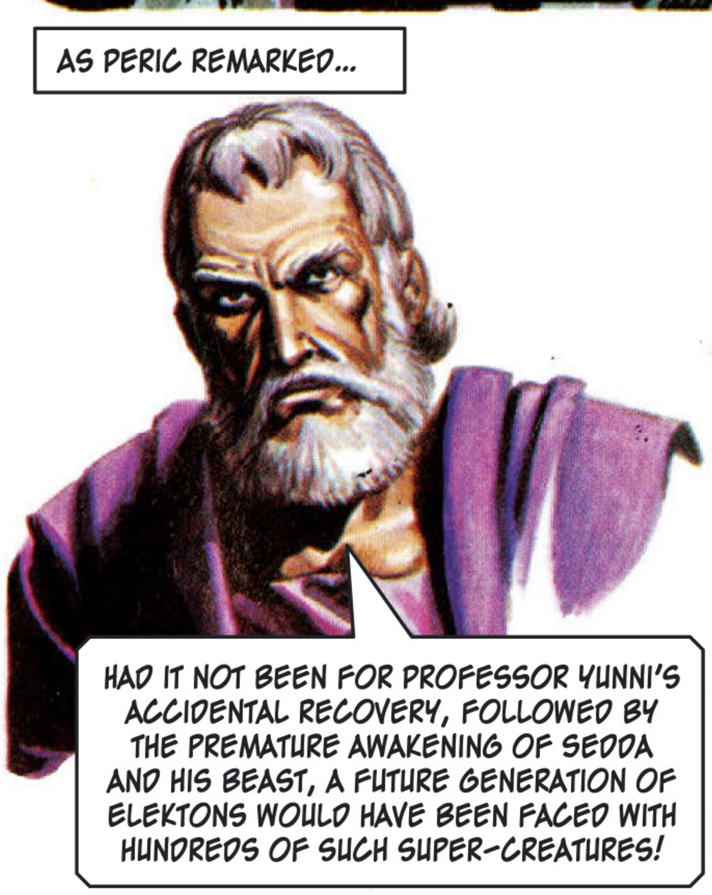

FOR MANY LONG LUNAR MONTHS, THE GREAT SCIENTIST BENT EVERY EFFORT TO UNSCRAMBLE THE PUZZLE OF THE INSCRIPTIONS. ONE NIGHT, HIS EFFORTS WERE REWARDED...
I HAVE IT!

THE INSCRIPTIONS TOLD OF A SUPER-RACE OF PEOPLE WHO HAD COME TO ELEKTON FORM ANOTHER DYING PLANET. THEIR LEADER WAS – SEDDA!


SOME TIME IN PRE-HISTORY, ELEKTON SHIFTED OUT OF ORBIT, CAUSING A DRAMATIC FALL IN TEMPERATURE. THE SUPER-RACE WERE THREATENED WITH EXTINCTION, BUT SEDDA WAS EQUAL TO THE CRISIS. HE CAUSED A CHOSEN NUMBER OF HIS PEOPLE TO BE FROZEN WITHIN BLOCKS OF TRANSPARENT MATERIAL.
THERE OUR PEOPLE WILL REMAIN, SEALED AWAY, TILL THE TEMPERATURE OF THIS PLANET RETURNS TO THAT WHICH WE NEED TO SUSTAIN LIFE – AS IT WILL IN A CALCULATED NUMBER OF LUNAR YEARS. THEN THEY WILL RETURN TO BE MASTERS!

THE TRANSPARENT BLOCKS WERE SEALED AWAY IN THE HEART OF THE MOUNTAIN. AS LEADER, SEDDA AND HIS ATTENDANT BEAST WERE PLACED IN THE OUTER CHAMBER, ALONE. AND IT WAS THERE THAT THEY WERE DISCOVERED BY PROFESSOR YUNNI.


THE BLOCK – MISTAKENLY THOUGHT BY SCIENTISTS TO HAVE BEEN A PRE-VORG RITUAL OBJECT – WAS PLACED IN THE MUSEUM. THERE, THE ARTIFICIALLY HIGH TEMPERATURE WAS THE OPTIMUM REQUIRED TO "AWAKEN" SEDDA AND BALGAR.


AS PERIC REMARKED...
HAD IT NOT BEEN FOR PROFESSOR YUNNI'S ACCIDENTAL RECOVERY, FOLLOWED BY THE PREMATURE AWAKENING OF SEDDA AND HIS BEAST, A FUTURE GENERATION OF ELEKTONS WOULD HAVE BEEN FACED WITH HUNDREDS OF SUCH SUPER-CREATURES!

TEMPERATURE WAS THE KEY, AS JANNO HAD ACCIDENTALLY DISCOVERED. THE SUPER-CREATURES COULD ONLY EXIST IN AN OPTIMUM TEMPERATURE TO WHICH ELEKTON WAS NOW PERILOUSLY CLOSE. BUT THE PERIL WAS PAST – THEY WOULD REMAIN ENCASED TILL ETERNITY – DEEP FROZEN!
THERE STANDS SEDDA AND HIS PEOPLE – FOR EVER!

LXV

THE TRIGAN EMPIRE

ABDICATION

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Story by Mike Butterworth

Art by Oliver Frey

IN THE FIFTH YEAR OF ZEER WAS FOUGHT, BETWEEN THE TRIGANS AND THEIR TRADITIONAL ENEMIES THE CATONS, A DESTRUCTIVE AND SICKENING WAR.

OLIVER TREY

THE TRIGANS WON AN EMPTY VICTORY. SOON AFTER, TRIGO WAS TAKEN ON A CONDUCTED TOUR OF THE BATTLE AREAS.

THAT HILL, SIRE, WAS CAPTURED BY YOUR OWN REGIMENT OF GUARDS, AT THE COST OF TWELVE THOUSAND TROOPS!

I KNOW IT WELL. BEFORE THE WAR, IT WAS A PLEASANT WOODED HILL, MUCH FAVOURED BY PICNICKERS!

AND TO THINK THAT TWELVE THOUSAND DIED THERE!

HE SAW THE TOWNS, RUINED AND ABANDONED AFTER AIR BOMBARDMENT.

THE CATON AIR FLEET FLATTENED THIS IN ONE NIGHT, SIRE.

IT WILL BE REBUILT – IT MUST BE REBUILT!

THE EMPEROR WAS PROFOUNDLY MOVED BY ALL HE HAD SEEN. AS HE SAID TO HIS OLD FRIEND AND CONFIDANT, THE GREAT SCIENTIST PERIC...

WHAT MANNER OF EMPEROR AM I – WHO ALLOW SUCH EVILS TO BEFALL HIS PEOPLE?

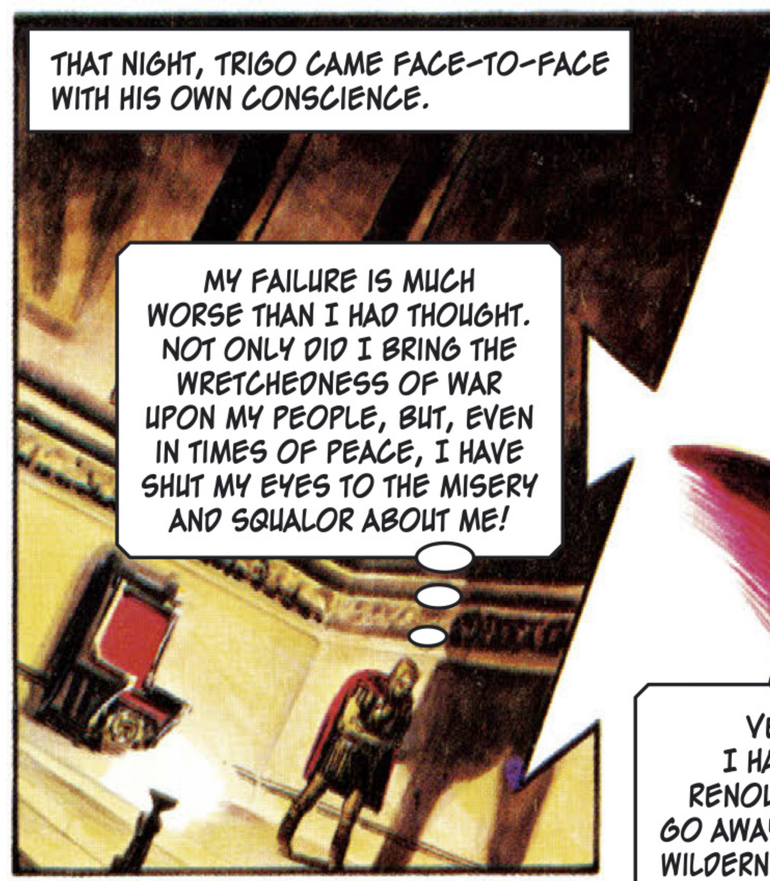
SIRE, YOU HAVE SEEN ONLY THE VERY WORST OF IT – THERE ARE OTHER THINGS THAT HAVE BEEN HIDDEN FROM YOUR EYES FOR YEARS!

PERIC GUIDED HIS EMPEROR ON A TOUR THROUGH THE RURAL AREAS OF THE VORG PLAIN.

MY FRIEND, YOU AND YOUR FAMILY APPEAR TO LIVE IN GREAT WRETCHEDNESS.

HOW CAN IT BE OTHERWISE? TEN LUNAR YEARS AGO, THE GOVERNMENT PROMISED TO IRRIGATE THE FIELDS IN THIS PROVINCE – BUT THEY REMAIN A DUST-BOWL!

AND SHOWED HIM THINGS IN HIS OWN CAPITAL CITY.
SPARE A ZERST, FOR I HAVE NOT EATEN ALL DAY, MASTERS.
AND TO THINK THAT THIS PEST-HOLE IS BUT A STONES THROW FROM MY IMPERIAL PALACE!

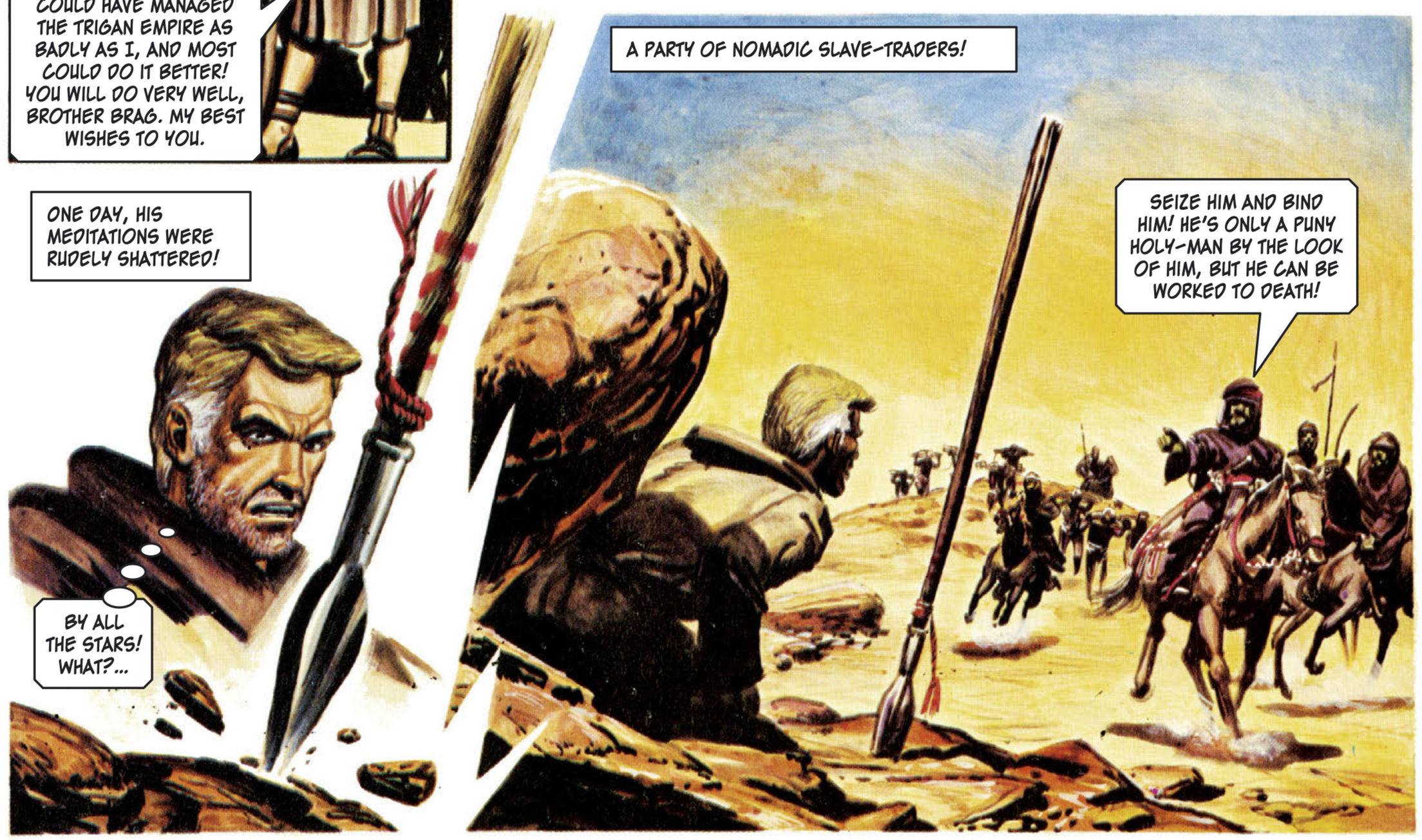

THAT NIGHT, TRIGO CAME FACE-TO-FACE WITH HIS OWN CONSCIENCE.
MY FAILURE IS MUCH WORSE THAN I HAD THOUGHT. NOT ONLY DID I BRING THE WRETCHEDNESS OF WAR UPON MY PEOPLE, BUT, EVEN IN TIMES OF PEACE, I HAVE SHUT MY EYES TO THE MISERY AND SQUALOR ABOUT ME!

VERY WELL, SINCE I HAVE FAILED, I WILL RENOUNCE MY THRONE AND GO AWAY - SOMEWHERE IN THE WILDERNESS, WHERE I CAN THINK THINGS OUT...TRY AND DISCOVER WHERE I WENT WRONG!

HIS FAMILY AND FRIENDS, THE GREAT COUNCIL OF THE EMPIRE - ALL WERE UNABLE TO SHAKE HIS RESOLVE.
BUT THIS IS MADNESS! WHERE WILL WE BE WITHOUT YOU?
ANYONE ON THIS PLANET COULD HAVE MANAGED THE TRIGAN EMPIRE AS BADLY AS I, AND MOST COULD DO IT BETTER! YOU WILL DO VERY WELL, BROTHER BRAG. MY BEST WISHES TO YOU.

OUT IN THE WILDERNESS, A LIGHTHEARTEDNESS CAME UPON THE SPIRITS OF THE EX-EMPEROR.
I'M FREE - FREE!

HE LIVED SIMPLY, FEEDING ON BERRIES AND HERBS, AND HE SPENT A GREAT PART OF EVERY DAY IN MEDITATION - AFTER THE MANNER OF THE ANCIENT VORG MYSTICS.


ONE DAY, HIS MEDITATIONS WERE RUDELY SHATTERED!
BY ALL THE STARS! WHAT?...
A PARTY OF NOMADIC SLAVE-TRADERS!
SEIZE HIM AND BIND HIM! HE'S ONLY A PUNY HOLY-MAN BY THE LOOK OF HIM, BUT HE CAN BE WORKED TO DEATH!

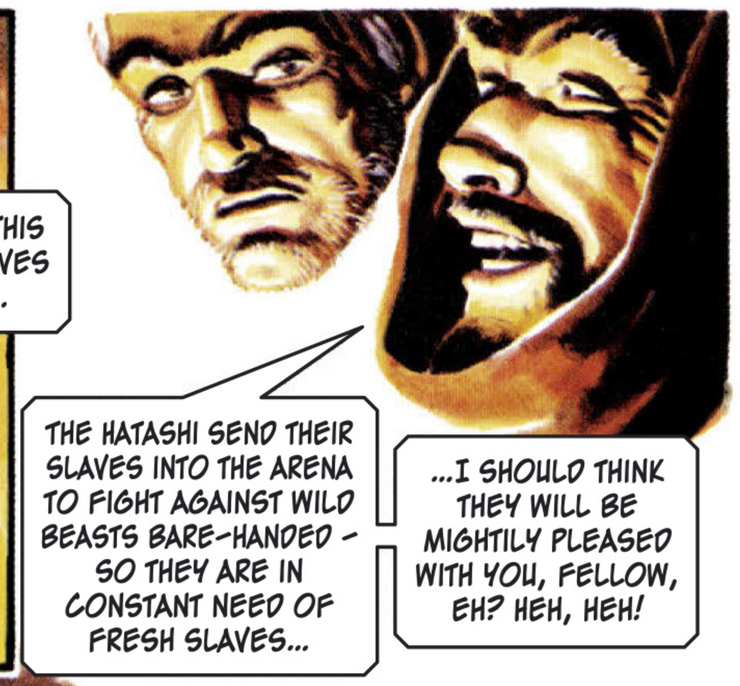
ONE OF THE SLAVERS LAID A CONTEMPTUOUS HAND UPON TRIGO...
ON YOUR FEET, HOLY MAN!
...AND SUFFERED GRAVELY IN CONSEQUENCE.
NNNNNNUUUGHHH!
THE SLAVERS' LEADER BARKED A BRUTAL ORDER.
YOU TWO. TEACH HIM A LESSON.
TRIGO DUCKED TO MISS A GLITTERING BLADE – AND DOVE HIS FIST FORWARD!
UUUUHH!
CATCHING THE FALLEN SWORD...
...HE PUT IT TO GOOD USE!
AAAAH!

NEXT INSTANT, THE EX-EMPEROR'S WORLD DISSOLVED IN A FLASH OF AGONY.
UUUUGH!
DON'T KILL HIM! SUCH A FIGHTER COULD BE USEFUL.
WHEN CONSCIOUSNESS RETURNED, TRIGO FOUND HIMSELF BEING HALF-CARRIED, HALF-DRAGGED.
WHERE AM I AND WHO...WHO ARE YOU?
A SLAVE LIKE YOURSELF, FELLOW! AND IN NO CONDITION TO HELP YOU ALONG FOR ONE INSTANT LONGER THAN YOU CAN WALK ON YOUR OWN TWO FEET!
WHO ARE THOSE SLAVE-TRADERS? WHERE ARE THEY TAKING US?
THEIR LEADER IS ZANNOBOPO, CHIEF OF ALL THE NOMADS OF THE BLACK WILDERNESS.
WE ARE BEING TAKEN TO THE SLAVE-MARKET. WE ARE DOOMED, ALL OF US. THERE IS NO ESCAPE!
AT NIGHT, THE SLAVERS MADE CAMP, AND THE EX-EMPEROR WAS ABLE TO QUESTION HIS COMPANIONS FURTHER.
BY YOUR DIALECT, YOU ARE OF THE OUTER-VORG TRIBE AND SUBJECTS OF THE TRIGAN EMPIRE.
THAT IS SO. WOULD YOU NOT THINK THAT OUR PRECIOUS EMPEROR WOULD STOP THIS EVIL TRAFFIC?
THE EMPEROR! PAH! WHAT DOES HE CARE?
TRIGO WAS SEIZED AND DRAGGED TO THE CAMP FIRE.
YOU SEE HIM, SLAVE? HE IS OUR GREATEST WRESTLER OF OUR PEOPLE. IF YOU CAN DEFEAT HIM IN A FIGHT, YOU WILL LIVE!
A BARBARIC FEAST WAS TAKING PLACE ABOUT THE SLAVERS' CAMP FIRE. AT ITS HEIGHT, THE GREAT CHIEF ZANNOBOPO BELLOWED A SAVAGE ORDER...
WE WILL HAVE SOME ENTERTAINMENT. BRING FORTH THE HOLY MAN WE CAPTURED TODAY.
IF HE DEFEATS YOU, YOU WILL PERISH. AND YOUR DYING SCREAMS WILL SWEETEN MY DREAMS TILL THE DAWN.

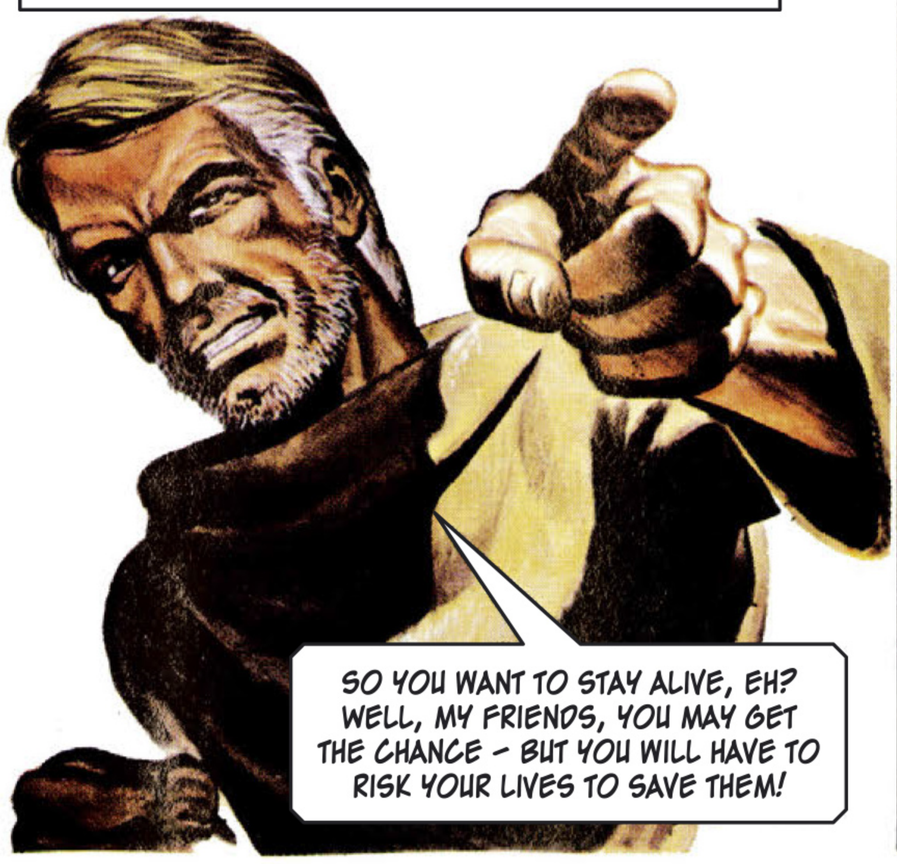
TRIGO SCARCELY HAD TIME TO STRIP BEFORE THE MASSIVE CREATURE WAS UPON HIM!
HAH!
THE SAVAGE ONLOOKERS YELLED WITH DELIGHT, TO SEE THEIR CHAMPION'S BRUTAL INTENTION.
YAAAAH!
BY THE STARS! ZONNI IS GOING TO THROW THE HOLY-MAN INTO THE CAMP FIRE!
OLIVER FREY
BUT – TRIGO WAS NOT FINISHED YET!
HE LEAPT HEADLONG – BRINGING HIS GIANT OPPONENT WITH HIM!
THE CHAMPION MANAGED TO HALF-RISE TO HIS FEET – BUT GOT NO FURTHER!
GAAAAH...
UUUUH...

CHIEF ZANNOBOPO'S MOOD CHANGED TO THAT OF HIGH DELIGHT. HE WAVED TRIGO TO SIT BY HIM.
I LIKE YOU, FELLOW! YOU SHALL FEAST BY MY SIDE THIS NIGHT!

TRIGO OBEYED, EATING SPARINGLY AND LISTENING TO THE SLAVE-TRADERS' BRUTAL CONVERSATION.
THE HATASHI PEOPLE WILL BUY THIS PRESENT CONSIGNMENT OF SLAVES AND THEY WILL PAY US WELL...


THE HATASHI SEND THEIR SLAVES INTO THE ARENA TO FIGHT AGAINST WILD BEASTS BARE-HANDED - SO THEY ARE IN CONSTANT NEED OF FRESH SLAVES...
...I SHOULD THINK THEY WILL BE MIGHTILY PLEASED WITH YOU, FELLOW, EH? HEH, HEH!

NEXT MORNING, THE CARAVAN CAME TO THE FORTRESS-CITY SURROUNDED BY THE BLACK MOUNTAINS THAT GAVE THE WILDERNESS ITS NAME.
INCARCERATED WITH HIS FELLOW SLAVES IN A HIGH-WALLED YARD, TRIGO ESCAPED INTO MEDITATION.
HOW DID I GO WRONG?... WHAT DID I DO THAT I SHOULD NOT HAVE DONE?...WHAT DID I NOT DO?...
TRIGO SMILED AT THE IRONY OF IT - THAT HE WHO HAD THROWN ASIDE AN EMPIRE, WAS NOW APPOINTED LEADER OF SLAVES. BUT HE ACCEPTED THE CHALLENGE...
BUT HE WAS RUDELY ROUSED...
LISTEN! ONCE WE GET TO THE LAND OF HATASHI, WE'RE AS GOOD AS DEAD, SO WE'VE DECIDED TO DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT...
AND WE'VE APPOINTED YOU AS OUR LEADER - SO WHAT ARE YOUR PLANS?


SO YOU WANT TO STAY ALIVE, EH? WELL, MY FRIENDS, YOU MAY GET THE CHANCE - BUT YOU WILL HAVE TO RISK YOUR LIVES TO SAVE THEM!

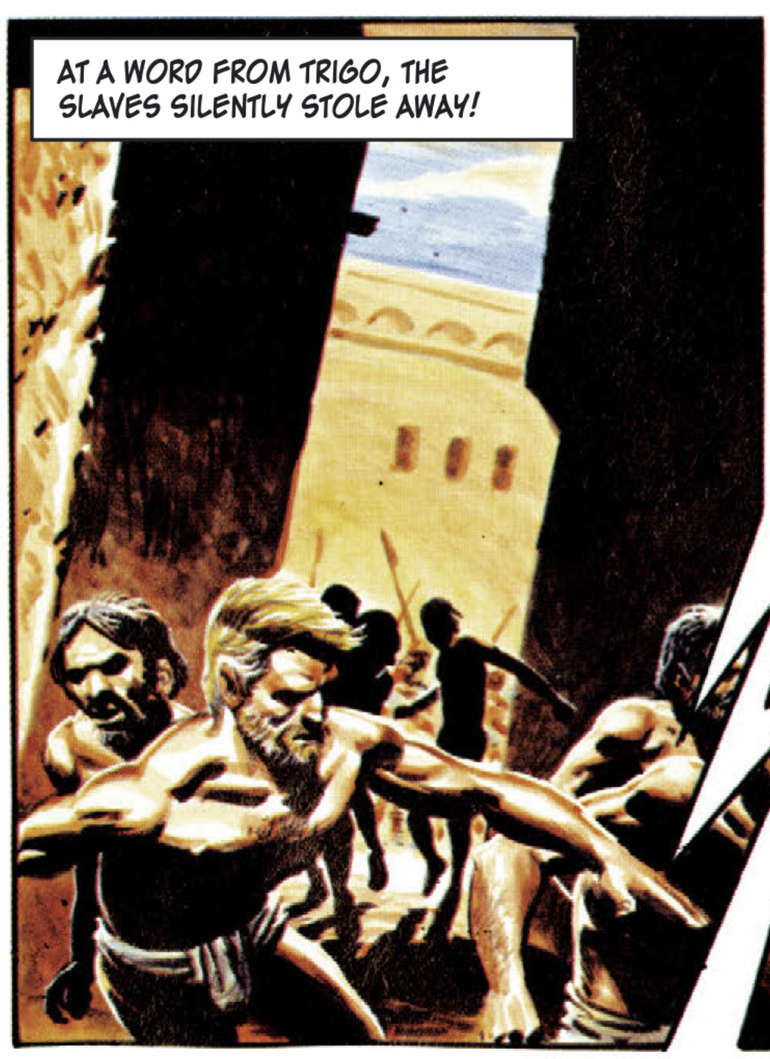
THAT EVE, THEY CAME TO THE CITY IN THE BLACK WILDERNESS - THE CRUEL HATASHI!

THE SLAVE MARKET BEGAN. TRIGO HIMSELF WAS THE FIRST TO BE OFFERED FOR SALE.
BEHOLD! HERE'S A FIGHTER WHO WILL DO WELL IN YOUR ARENA. WITH HIS OWN HANDS HE HAS DEFEATED MY CHAMPION WRESTLER.
I WILL GIVE YOU FIFTY THULLARS FOR HIM – AND HE WILL BE MATCHED AGAINST TWO ZARGOTS, BARE-HANDED!
OLIVER FREY
ALL THE FINEST AND STRONGEST OF THE VORGS WERE BROUGHT TO PROVIDE BARBARIC ENTERTAINMENT IN THE HATASHI ARENA.
SOLD – FOR FORTY-FIVE THULLARS!
DO YOU THINK YOUR SCHEME WILL WORK?
IF IT WORKS, WE GO FREE – IF IT FAILS, WE DIE!
A HARSH ORDER...
MARCH, YOU ANIMALS! – YOU HAVE FAR TO GO!
BUT, AT A NOD FROM TRIGO...
...THE SLAVES SAT DOWN!
ON YOUR FEET, ANIMALS! MOVE! MOVE!
WHEN IT BECAME OBVIOUS THAT THE SLAVES HAD NO INTENTION OF MOVING, A BROAD GRIN SPREAD OVER CHIEF ZANNOBOPO'S COUNTENANCE.
I DO NOT THINK THAT OUR FRIENDS THAT HATASHI ARE GOING TO BE ABLE TO PERSUADE THEM TO MARCH TO THEIR DEATHS!

THE HATASHI LEADER SAW THE GRIN, AND SCREAMED A WILD ACCUSATION!
IT'S A TRICK! YOU HAVE TAKEN OUR MONEY, NOW YOU THINK YOU WILL KEEP THE SLAVES!
BY ALL THE STARS, NO ONE CALLS ME A CHEAT TO MY FACE AND LIVES!

LOOK YOUR LAST UPON THE SKY!

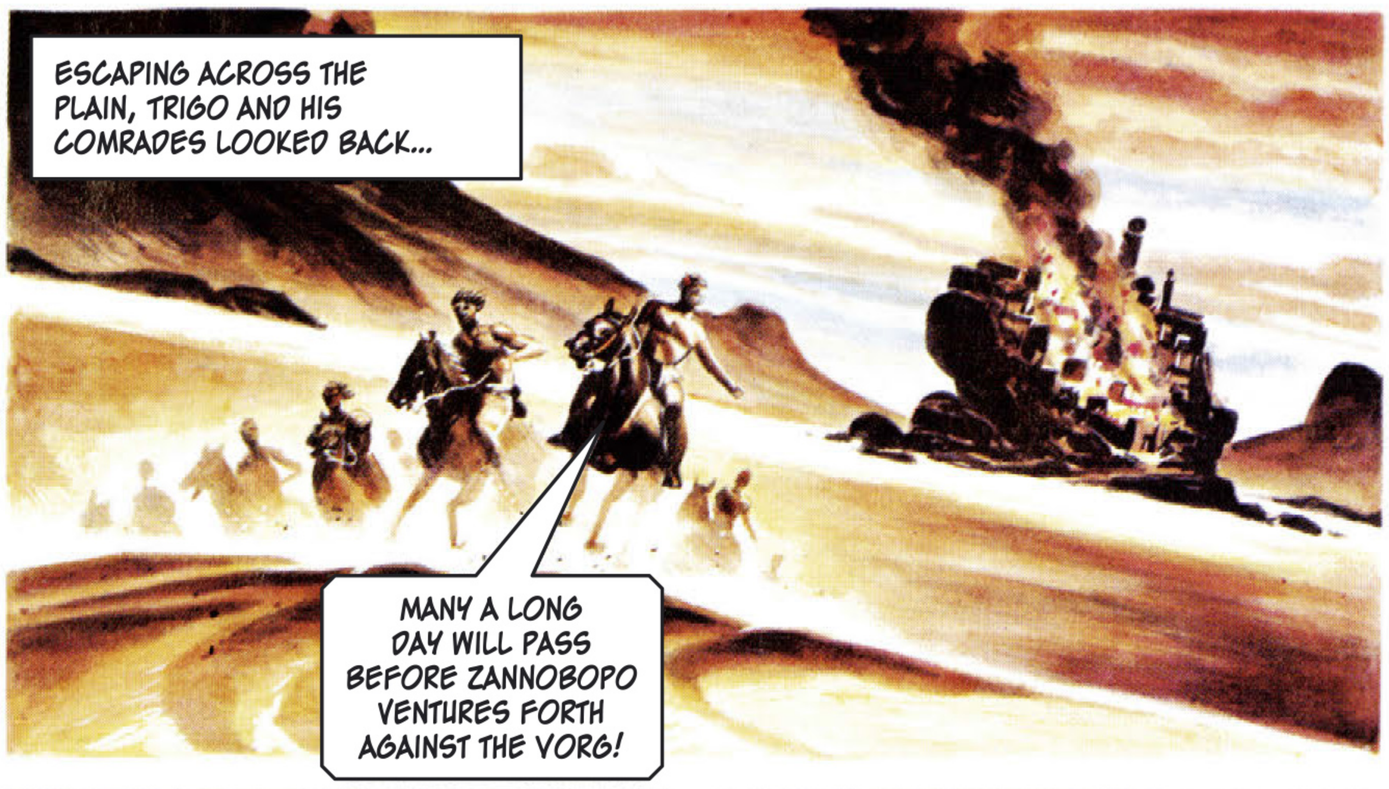
IN NO TIME AT ALL, HATASHI WARRIORS AND SLAVERS WERE FIGHTING TOOTH AND NAIL!
IT'S WORKED!
BE READY TO MOVE WHEN I GIVE THE WORD!

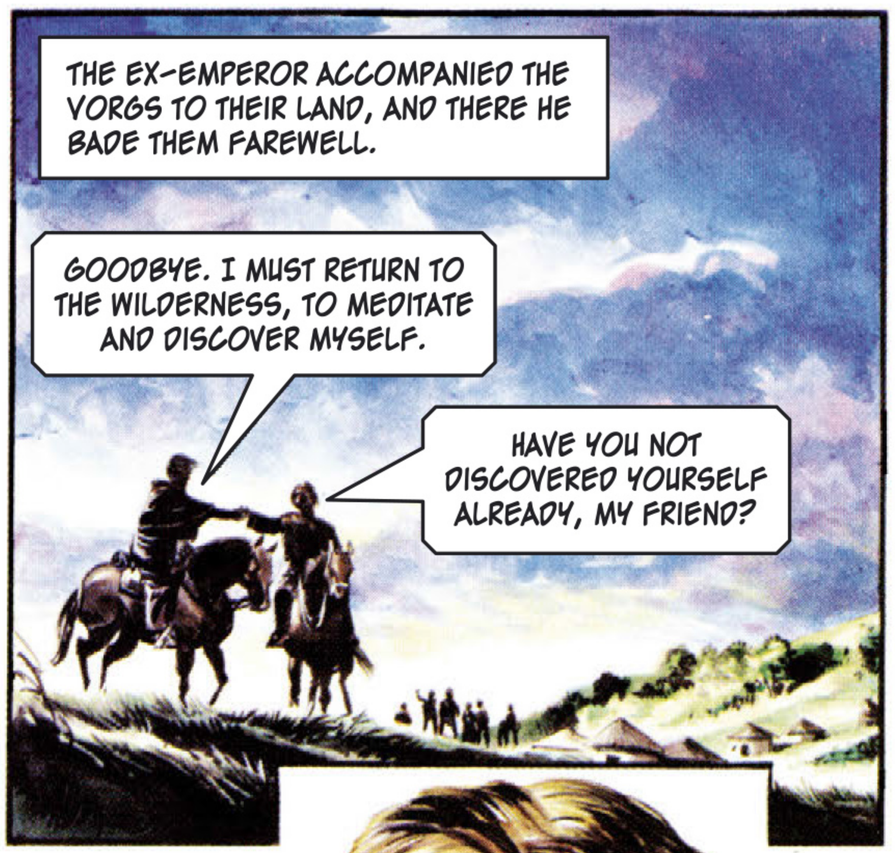

AT A WORD FROM TRIGO, THE SLAVES SILENTLY STOLE AWAY!

TRIGO BROKE INTO A RUN – AS HE SAW A LINE OF POWERFUL KREEDS...
IF I CAN REACH THAT HATASHI GUARD BEFORE HE TURNS...

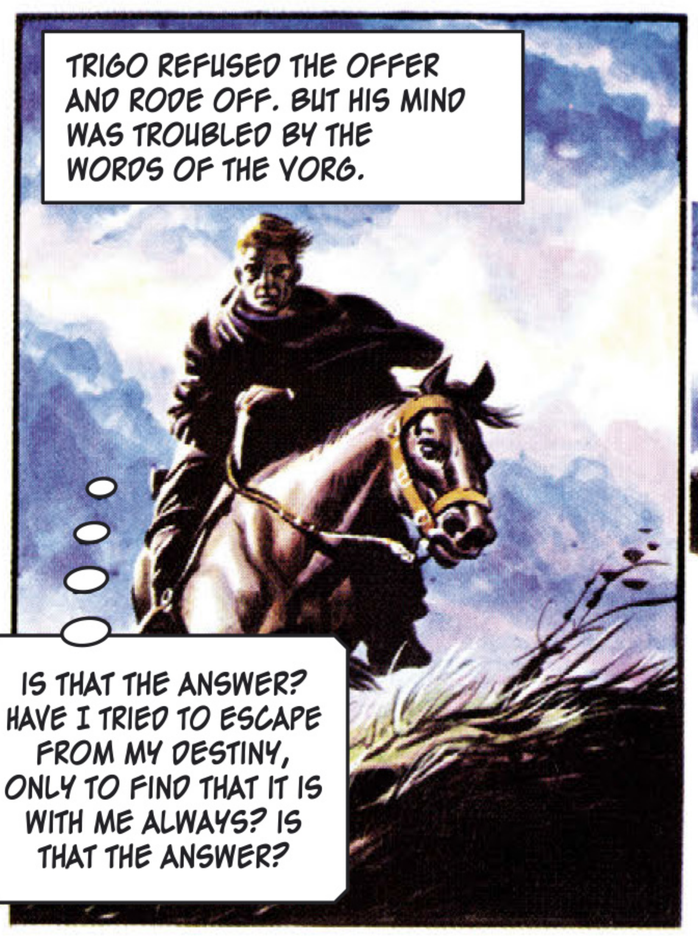
BUT THE HATASHI HEARD FOOTFALLS... TURNED...DREW!...
AAAAAGH!

THE HATASHI GUARD'S BRIGHT BLADE FLASHED IN THE SUNLIGHT – BUT IT NEVER FOUND ITS MARK!
UUUUGH!
THE ESCAPING SLAVES LEAPT TO THE TETHERED KREEDS.
ONWARD! – TO FREEDOM!
THUNDERING PAST A BLACKSMITH'S FORGE TRIGO, SWEPT UP A BLAZING BRAND...
DO AS I AM DOING! – SEIZE A TORCH!
...HURLED IT AMONG THE MASS OF BUILDINGS! OTHERS FOLLOWED!
OLIVER FREY
IN THE GREAT SQUARE OF THE CITY, WHERE SLAVE-TRADERS BATTLED WITH THE HATASHI, CHIEF ZANNOBOPO PAUSED IN HIS LABOURS AND LOOKED ABOUT HIM.
BY ALL THE STARS! THE CITY'S AFIRE!


ESCAPING ACROSS THE PLAIN, TRIGO AND HIS COMRADES LOOKED BACK...
MANY A LONG DAY WILL PASS BEFORE ZANNOBOPO VENTURES FORTH AGAINST THE VORG!


THE EX-EMPEROR ACCOMPANIED THE VORGS TO THEIR LAND, AND THERE HE BADE THEM FAREWELL.
GOODBYE. I MUST RETURN TO THE WILDERNESS, TO MEDITATE AND DISCOVER MYSELF.
HAVE YOU NOT DISCOVERED YOURSELF ALREADY, MY FRIEND?

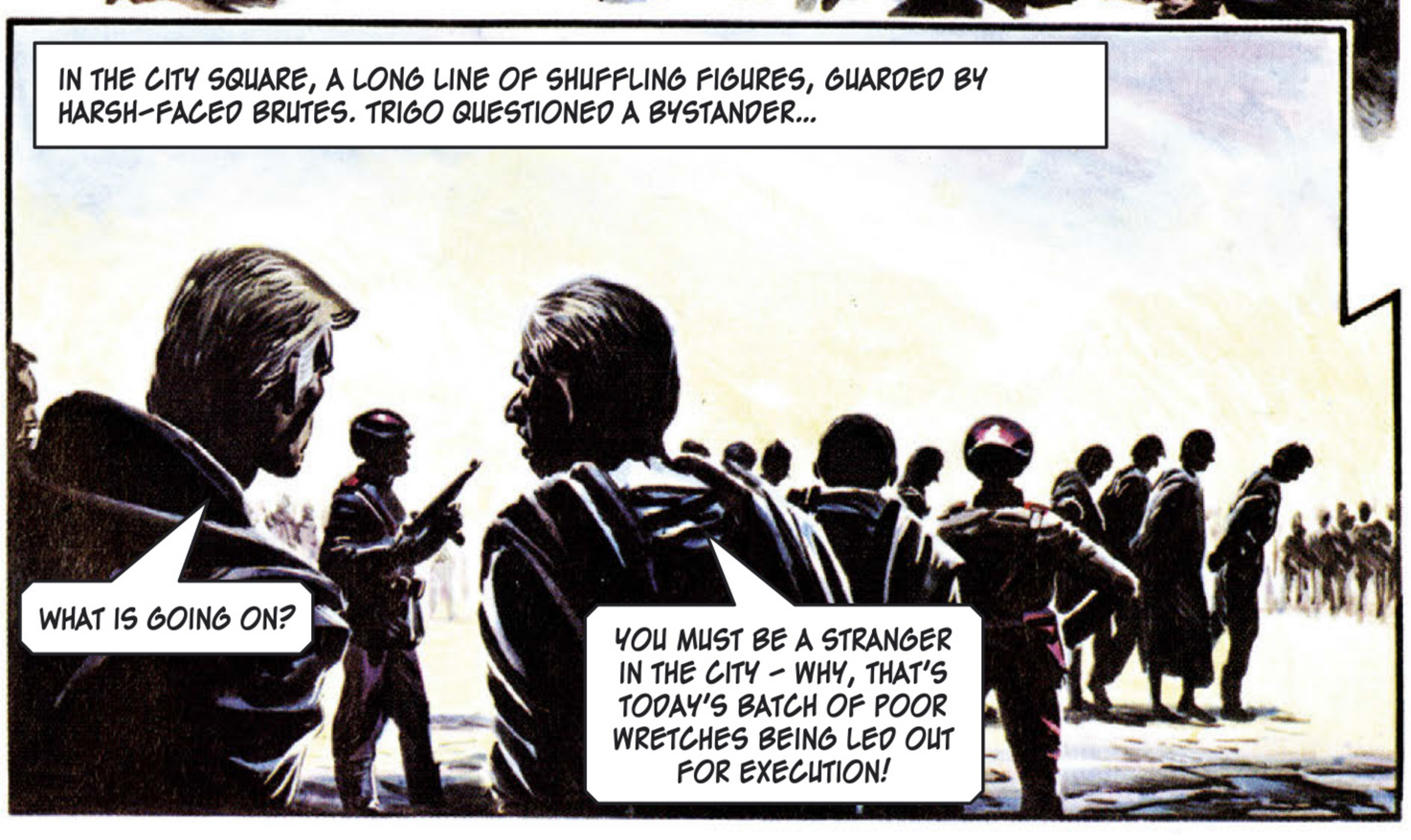
YOUR DESTINY IS TO LEAD! STAY WITH US AND BE OUR CHIEF!


TRIGO REFUSED THE OFFER AND RODE OFF. BUT HIS MIND WAS TROUBLED BY THE WORDS OF THE VORG.
IS THAT THE ANSWER? HAVE I TRIED TO ESCAPE FROM MY DESTINY, ONLY TO FIND THAT IT IS WITH ME ALWAYS? IS THAT THE ANSWER?

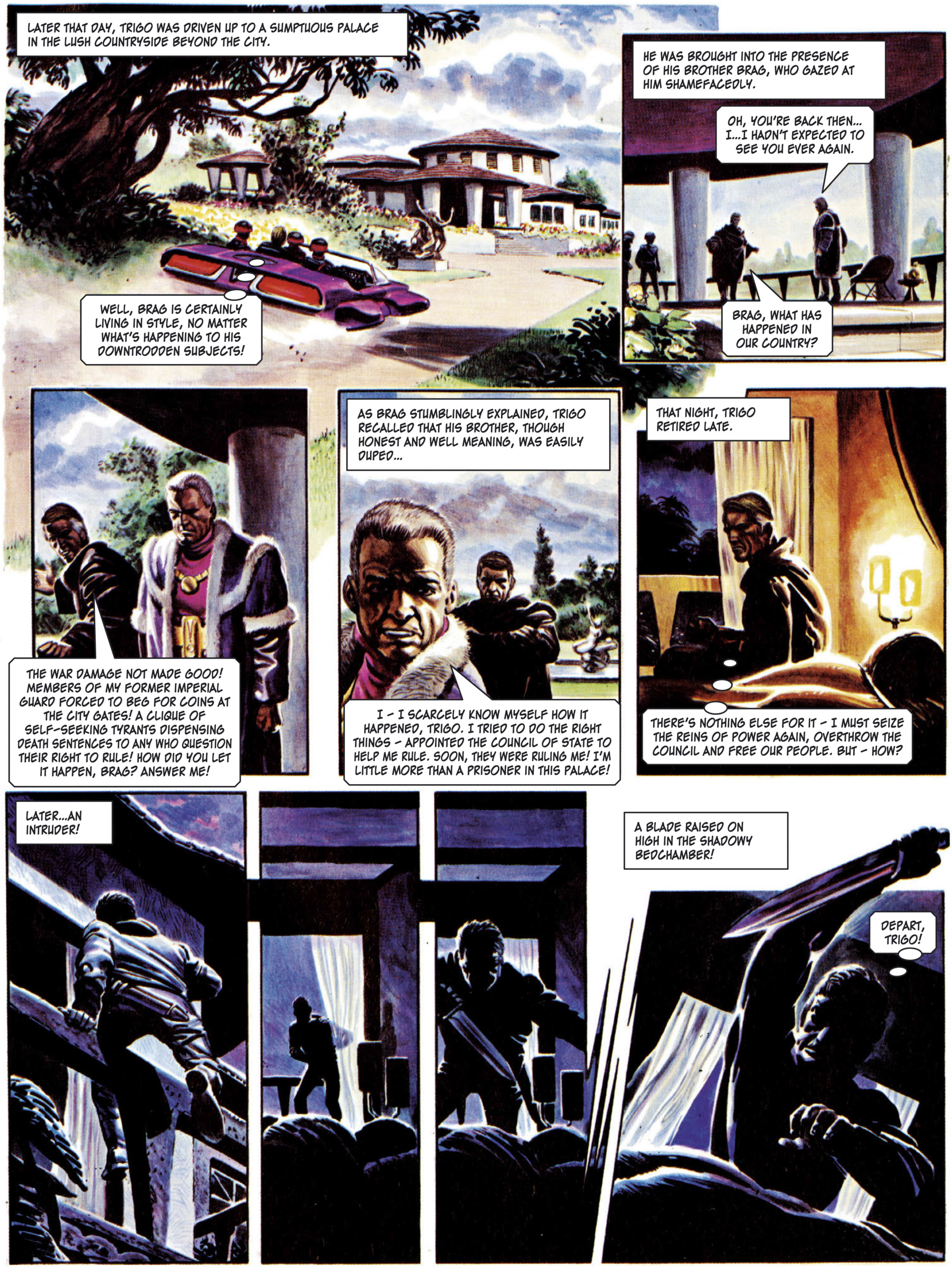
I WILL RETURN TO TRIGAN CITY! THAT IS WHERE MY DUTY LIES – IT WAS WRITTEN IN THE STARS!

HE CAME, AT LAST, TO THE OUTSKIRTS OF THE CITY THAT HE HAD FOUNDED. IT STILL BORE THE SCARS OF THE LATE WAR...
BUT – NO REBUILDING HAS BEEN DONE! WHAT HAPPENED TO THE MILLION THULLARS I APPORTIONED FOR THE TASK?

BY THE CITY GATES...
ALMS, GOOD FRIEND. ALMS FOR A WOUNDED GUARDSMAN.

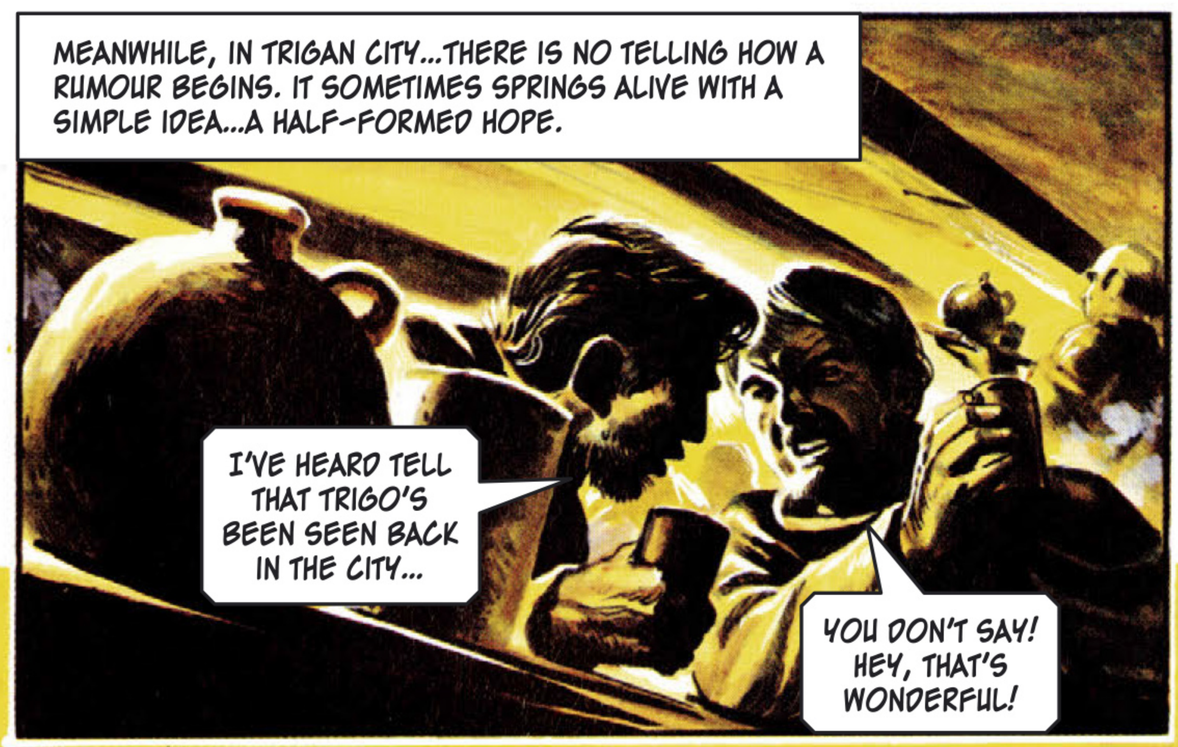

IN THE CITY SQUARE, A LONG LINE OF SHUFFLING FIGURES, GUARDED BY HARSH-FACED BRUTES. TRIGO QUESTIONED A BYSTANDER...
WHAT IS GOING ON?
YOU MUST BE A STRANGER IN THE CITY – WHY, THAT'S TODAY'S BATCH OF POOR WRETCHES BEING LED OUT FOR EXECUTION!

TRIGO STRODE FORWARD, FEARLESSLY DENOUNCING THE BRUTAL GUARDS WHO WERE ESCORTING THE CONDEMNED PRISONERS.
NEXT INSTANT...
UUUUUH!
THESE PEOPLE WILL NOT BE HARMED! IT IS AGAINST THE LAW OF THE TRIGAN EMPIRE FOR FREE-BORN CITIZENS TO BE PUT TO THE SWORD.
LATER, THE EX-EMPEROR WAS DRAGGED BEFORE A COURT COMPRISING FIVE BLOATED INDIVIDUALS IN RICH ROBES.
AND WHO, BY THE STARS, ARE YOU?
WE ARE THE COUNCIL OF STATE OF THE EMPIRE, APPOINTED TO RULE IN THE NAME OF THE HEAD OF STATE, LORD BRAG.
OLIVER FREY
AND I AM TRIGO!
OF THAT WE ARE AWARE. ALSO THAT YOU SAW FIT TO QUESTION OUR SENTENCES AGAINST SUNDRY ROGUES WHO COMMITTED HIGH TREASON BY ACCUSING US OF CORRUPTION. HOWEVER, SINCE YOU VOLUNTARILY ABDICATED YOUR THRONE, YOU NO LONGER HAVE ANY POWER HERE.
YOU WILL BE PERMITTED TO RESIDE WITH THE HEAD OF STATE, THE LORD BRAG, IN HIS COUNTRY PALACE. ESCORT HIS EXCELLENCY THE EX-EMPEROR FROM THE COURT!
AFTER TRIGO HAD BEEN DRAGGED AWAY, PROTESTING, THEY SUMMONED A SHIFTY-EYED INDIVIDUAL.
YOU WILL ACCOMPANY TRIGO AND FIND AN EARLY OPPORTUNITY DISCREETLY TO - HOW SHALL I PUT IT?...
ENSURE HIS DEPARTURE FROM THIS HARSH LIFE, YOUR EXCELLENCY?
BEAUTIFULLY PUT. QUITE POETIC.

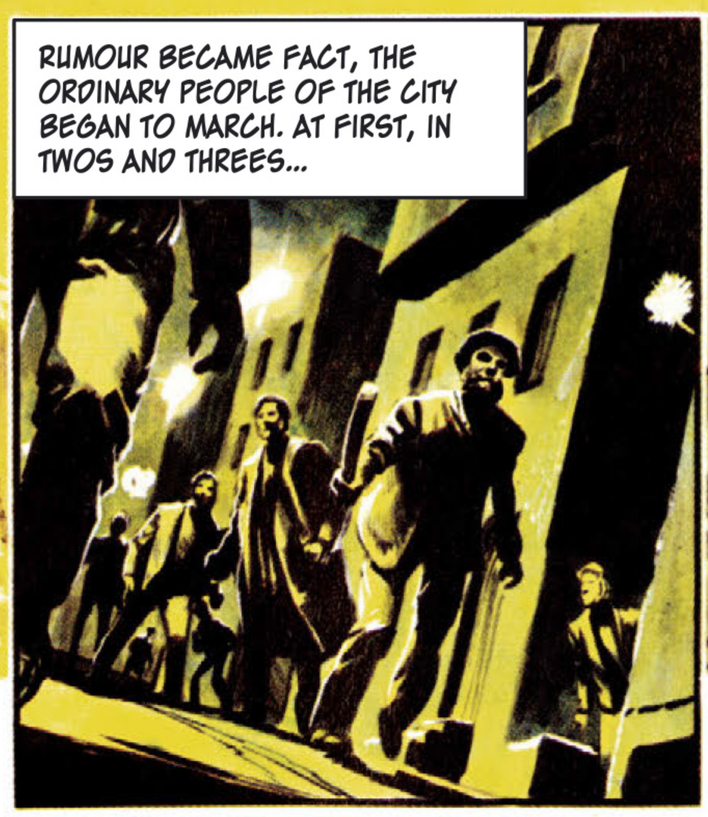

LATER THAT DAY, TRIGO WAS DRIVEN UP TO A SUMPTUOUS PALACE IN THE LUSH COUNTRYSIDE BEYOND THE CITY.
WELL, BRAG IS CERTAINLY LIVING IN STYLE, NO MATTER WHAT'S HAPPENING TO HIS DOWNTRODDEN SUBJECTS!
HE WAS BROUGHT INTO THE PRESENCE OF HIS BROTHER BRAG, WHO GAZED AT HIM SHAMEFACEDLY.
OH, YOU'RE BACK THEN... I...I HADN'T EXPECTED TO SEE YOU EVER AGAIN.
BRAG, WHAT HAS HAPPENED IN OUR COUNTRY?
THE WAR DAMAGE NOT MADE GOOD! MEMBERS OF MY FORMER IMPERIAL GUARD FORCED TO BEG FOR COINS AT THE CITY GATES! A CLIQUE OF SELF-SEEKING TYRANTS DISPENSING DEATH SENTENCES TO ANY WHO QUESTION THEIR RIGHT TO RULE! HOW DID YOU LET IT HAPPEN, BRAG? ANSWER ME!
AS BRAG STUMBLINGLY EXPLAINED, TRIGO RECALLED THAT HIS BROTHER, THOUGH HONEST AND WELL MEANING, WAS EASILY DUPED...
I - I SCARCELY KNOW MYSELF HOW IT HAPPENED, TRIGO. I TRIED TO DO THE RIGHT THINGS - APPOINTED THE COUNCIL OF STATE TO HELP ME RULE. SOON, THEY WERE RULING ME! I'M LITTLE MORE THAN A PRISONER IN THIS PALACE!
THAT NIGHT, TRIGO RETIRED LATE.
THERE'S NOTHING ELSE FOR IT - I MUST SEIZE THE REINS OF POWER AGAIN, OVERTHROW THE COUNCIL AND FREE OUR PEOPLE. BUT - HOW?
LATER...AN INTRUDER!
A BLADE RAISED ON HIGH IN THE SHADOWY BEDCHAMBER!
DEPART, TRIGO!

THE BLADE FELL UPON THE SHAPE IN THE BED! AS IT ROSE FOR THE SECOND TIME...
AAAAGH!
AND...
EEEEAAGH!
OLIVER FREY
THE WOULD-BE KILLER LOOKED DOWN THE LENGTH OF HIS OWN SWORD.
THE - THE COUNCIL OF STATE'S ORDERS!
ON WHOSE ORDERS? - SPEAK!
BINDING HIS VICTIM, TRIGO LEFT HIS BEDCHAMBER BY WAY OF THE BALCONY.
BRAG WAS ROUSED BY HIS BROTHER A SHORT WHILE LATER.
TRIGO!
NOT A SOUND! THE GUARD ON YOUR DOOR WILL HEAR US!

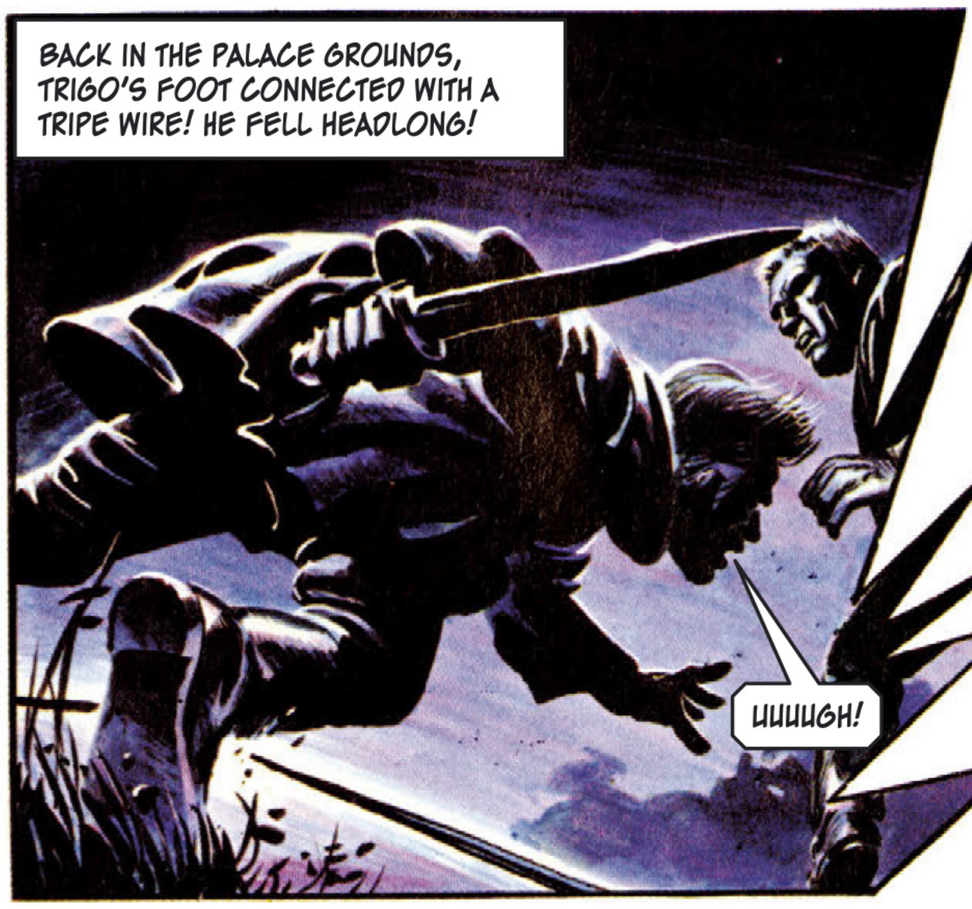
THE COUNCIL SENT A KILLER TO ASSASSINATE ME TONIGHT. DON'T YOU SEE, THEY'LL NOT REST TILL THEY'RE RID OF BOTH OF US – AND THEN WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO OUR PEOPLE? BRAG, WE'VE GOT TO GET FREE OF HERE!
YOU'RE RIGHT, TRIGO! – AS USUAL!
DESCENDING TO THE GROUNDS OF THE PALACE, THE TWO BROTHERS SET OUT INTO THE DARKNESS.
TREAD CAREFULLY, TRIGO. THERE ARE TRIP WIRES EVERYWHERE, WITH AUTOMATIC SEARCHLIGHTS...GUNS...

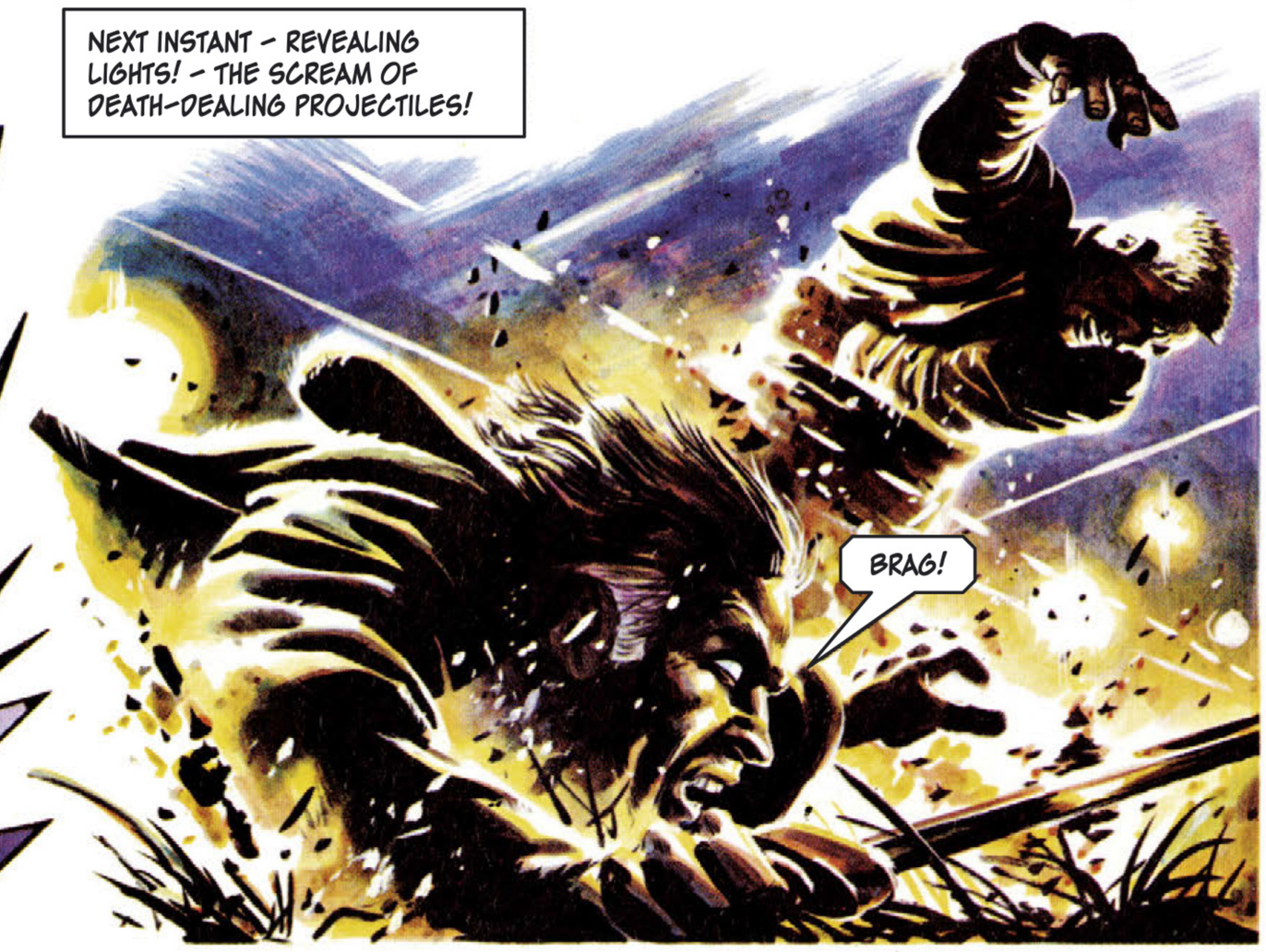

MEANWHILE, IN TRIGAN CITY...THERE IS NO TELLING HOW A RUMOUR BEGINS. IT SOMETIMES SPRINGS ALIVE WITH A SIMPLE IDEA...A HALF-FORMED HOPE.
I'VE HEARD TELL THAT TRIGO'S BEEN SEEN BACK IN THE CITY...
YOU DON'T SAY! HEY, THAT'S WONDERFUL!

RUMOUR PASSES FROM LIP TO LIP. IT GROWS STRONGER, COLLECTS CONFIRMING EVIDENCE...
HE'S BACK, ALL RIGHT!
THE COUNCIL HAVE SENT HIM TO JOIN HIS BROTHER BRAG IN THE COUNTRY PALACE!
I'LL GO SPREAD THE NEWS!


RUMOUR BECAME FACT, THE ORDINARY PEOPLE OF THE CITY BEGAN TO MARCH. AT FIRST, IN TWOS AND THREES...

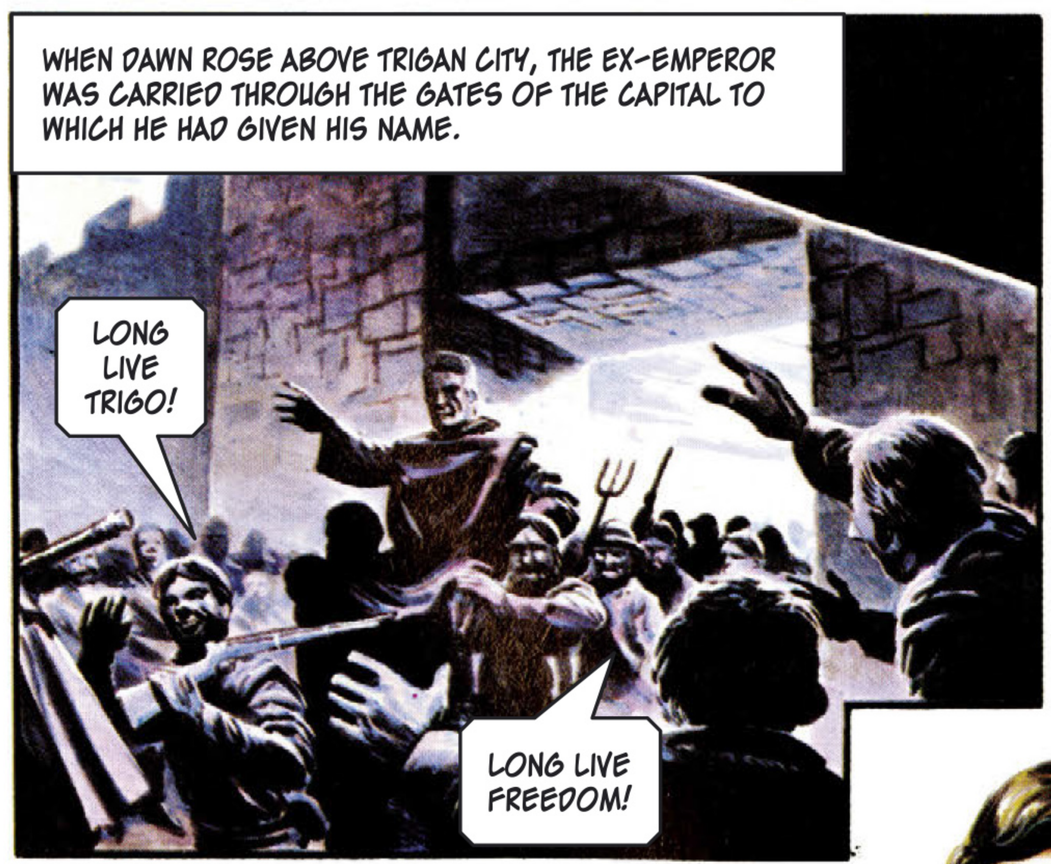
AT THE CITY GATES, THEY BECAME AN ARMY...AN ARMY THAT THREW ASIDE THE GUARDS AND BURST OUT TO FREEDOM.
TO THE COUNTRY PALACE!
LIBERTY FOR TRIGO!

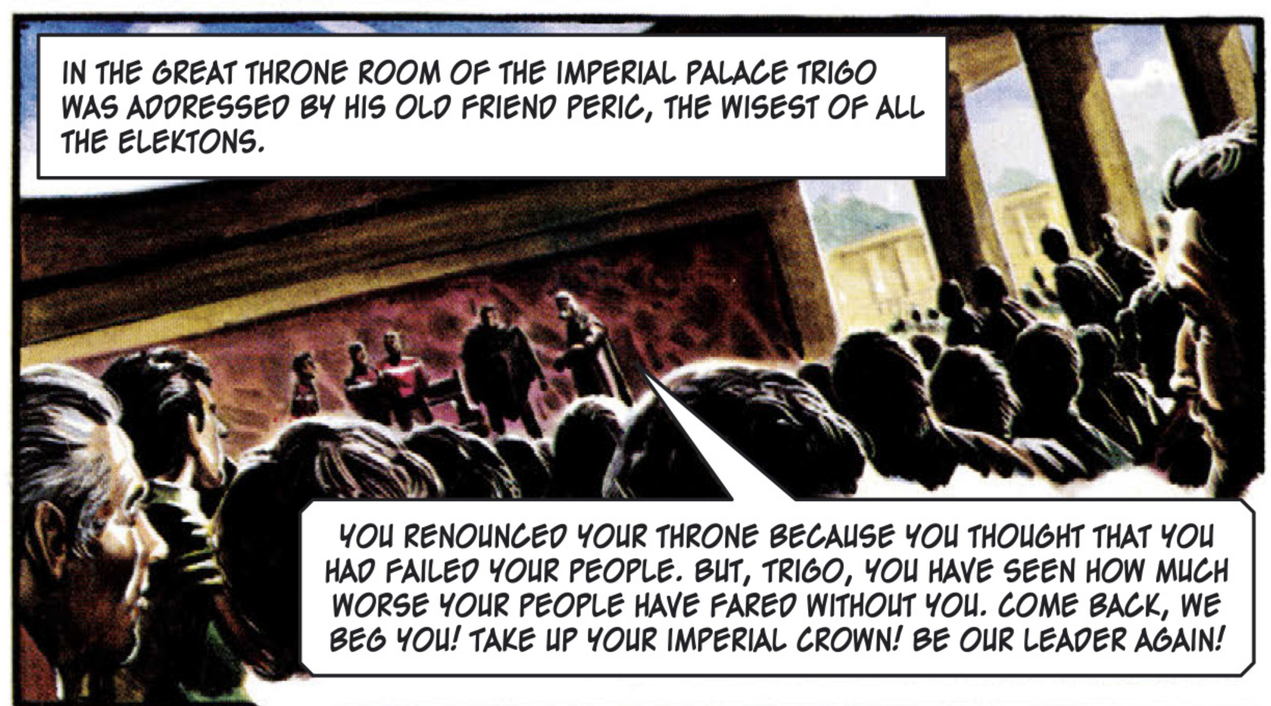

BACK IN THE PALACE GROUNDS, TRIGO'S FOOT CONNECTED WITH A TRIPE WIRE! HE FELL HEADLONG!
UUUUGH!


NEXT INSTANT – REVEALING LIGHTS! – THE SCREAM OF DEATH-DEALING PROJECTILES!
BRAG!

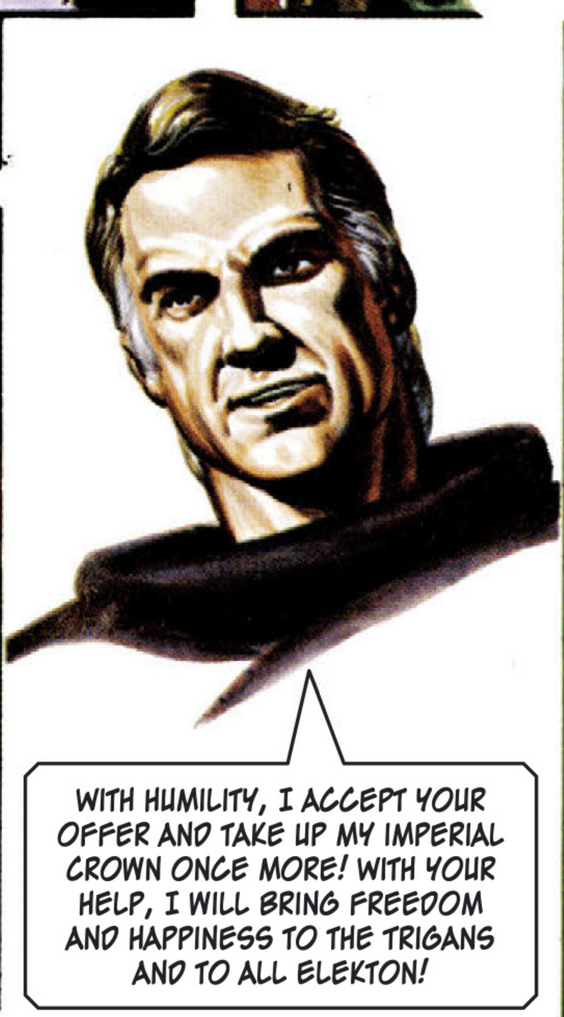
PICKING UP HIS WOUNDED BROTHER, TRIGO RAN THROUGH THE HAIL OF HURTLING DEATH.
HE CAME TO A RAMPART, WITH DARK WATERS OF A MOAT FAR BELOW. A SHOUT RANG OUT...
HEY! – STAY WHERE YOU ARE!
THE EX-EMPEROR'S SWORD FLASHED IN THE MOONLIGHT!
AAAAGH!
AND THEN, STILL HOLDING HIS PRECIOUS BURDEN – HE LEAPT!
HERE GOES THE LAST OF THE TRIGAN EMPERORS!
A HELI-JET, BRISTLING WITH GUNS AND SUMMONED BY THE DISTURBANCE, SIGHTED THE FIGURES ON THE MOAT – AND OPENED FIRE.
WE'RE DONE FOR, NOW!
OLIVER FREY

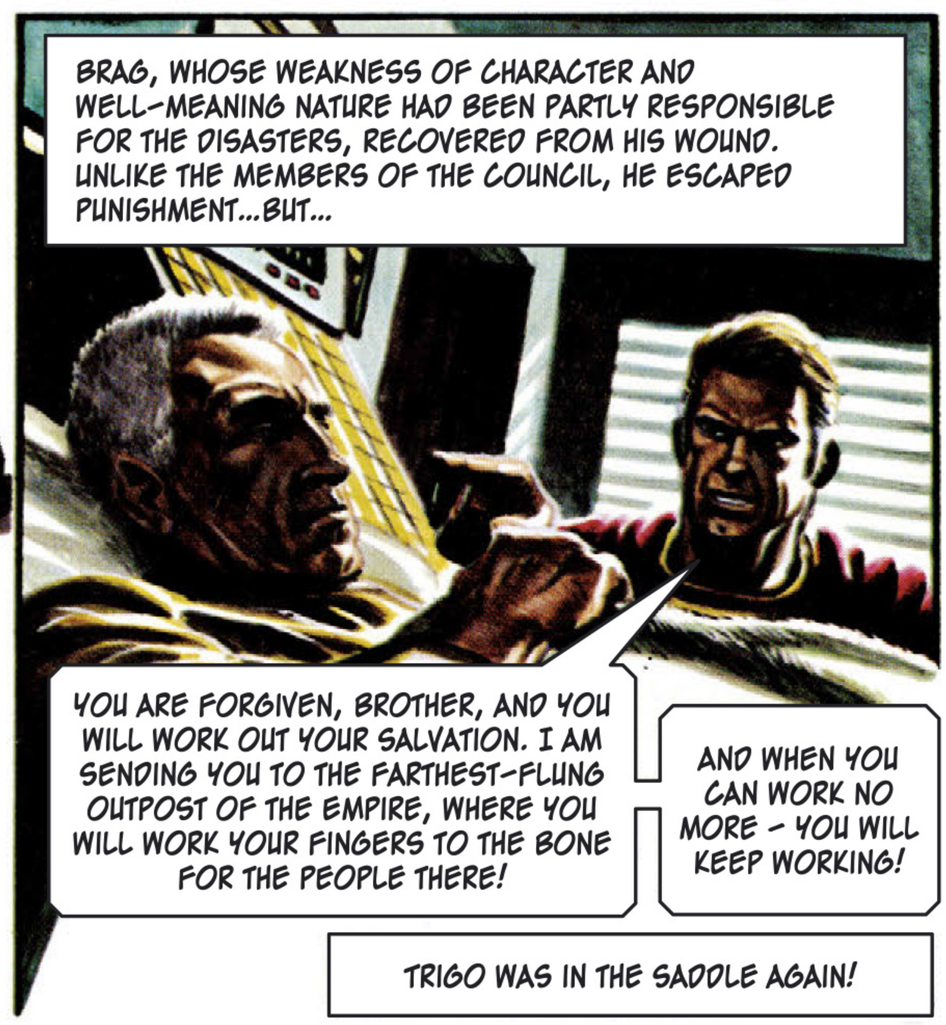
AT THE MOMENT, AS IF BY A MIRACLE, THE MOB FROM TRIGAN CITY ARRIVED. ALL ARMED WITH WHATEVER WEAPONS THEY COULD LAY HANDS ON – INCLUDING SOME ANCIENT JET-GUNS, WITH WHICH THEY OPENED FIRE AT THE HELI-JET!
LET 'EM HAVE IT, LADS!
KINDLY HANDS ASSISTED THE FUGITIVES TO DRY LAND.
BY THE STARS! IT IS TRIGO HIMSELF! AND BRAG!
HANDLE HIM GENTLY, MY FRIENDS. I FEAR HE IS BADLY HURT.


WHEN DAWN ROSE ABOVE TRIGAN CITY, THE EX-EMPEROR WAS CARRIED THROUGH THE GATES OF THE CAPITAL TO WHICH HE HAD GIVEN HIS NAME.
LONG LIVE TRIGO!
LONG LIVE FREEDOM!

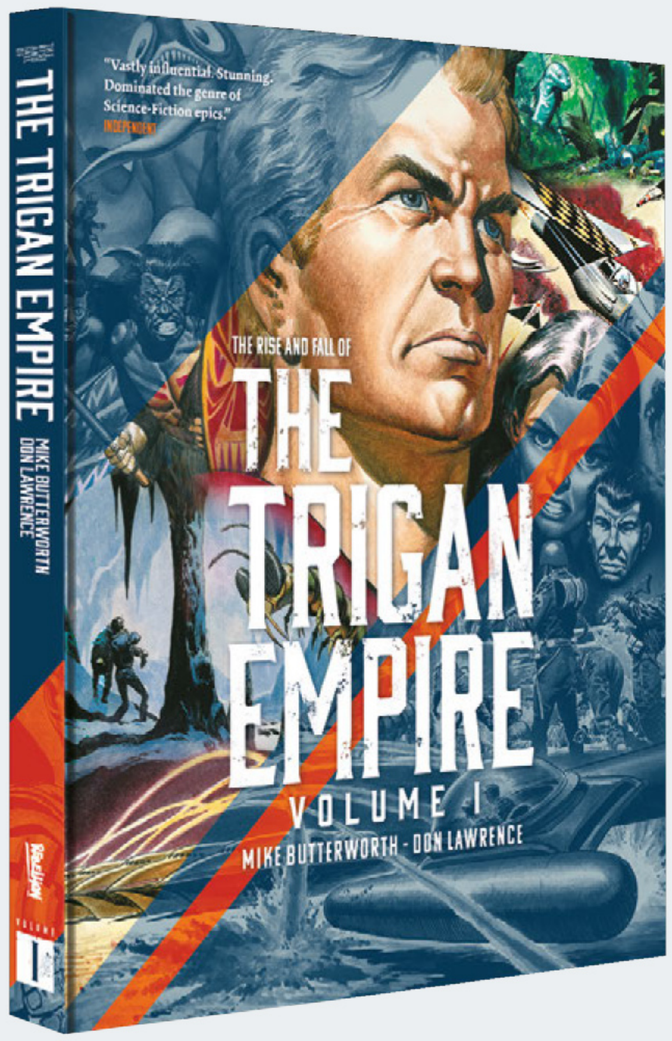

IN THE GREAT THRONE ROOM OF THE IMPERIAL PALACE TRIGO WAS ADDRESSED BY HIS OLD FRIEND PERIC, THE WISEST OF ALL THE ELEKTONS.
YOU RENOUNCED YOUR THRONE BECAUSE YOU THOUGHT THAT YOU HAD FAILED YOUR PEOPLE. BUT, TRIGO, YOU HAVE SEEN HOW MUCH WORSE YOUR PEOPLE HAVE FARED WITHOUT YOU. COME BACK, WE BEG YOU! TAKE UP YOUR IMPERIAL CROWN! BE OUR LEADER AGAIN!

SOLEMNLY, TRIGO REPLIED.
MY FRIENDS, I HAVE THOUGHT LONG ABOUT MY DESTINY, AND I HAVE TRAVELLED FAR TO FIND IT. MY DESTINY IS RIGHT HERE.


WITH HUMILITY, I ACCEPT YOUR OFFER AND TAKE UP MY IMPERIAL CROWN ONCE MORE! WITH YOUR HELP, I WILL BRING FREEDOM AND HAPPINESS TO THE TRIGANS AND TO ALL ELEKTON!


BRAG, WHOSE WEAKNESS OF CHARACTER AND WELL-MEANING NATURE HAD BEEN PARTLY RESPONSIBLE FOR THE DISASTERS, RECOVERED FROM HIS WOUND. UNLIKE THE MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL, HE ESCAPED PUNISHMENT...BUT...
YOU ARE FORGIVEN, BROTHER, AND YOU WILL WORK OUT YOUR SALVATION. I AM SENDING YOU TO THE FARTHEST-FLUNG OUTPOST OF THE EMPIRE, WHERE YOU WILL WORK YOUR FINGERS TO THE BONE FOR THE PEOPLE THERE!
AND WHEN YOU CAN WORK NO MORE – YOU WILL KEEP WORKING!
TRIGO WAS IN THE SADDLE AGAIN!

THE RISE AND FALL OF THE TRIGAN EMPIRE



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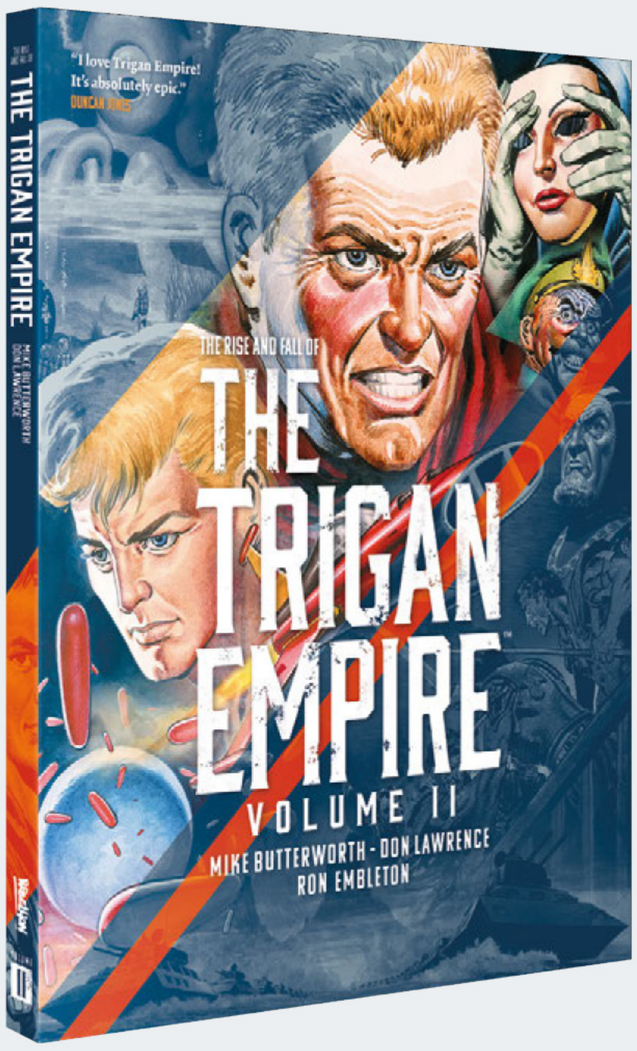

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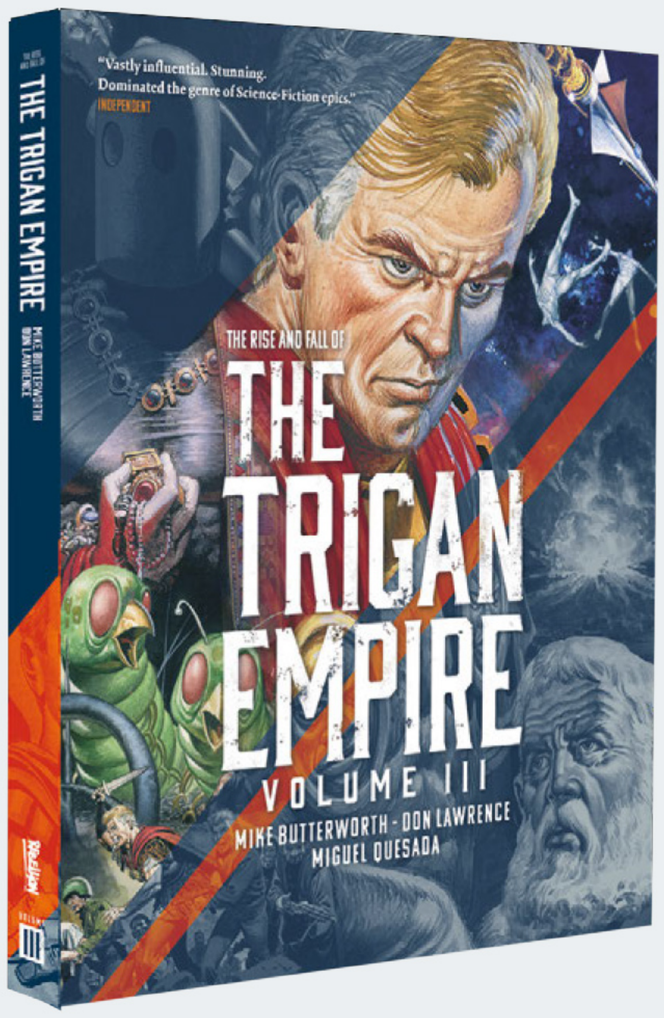

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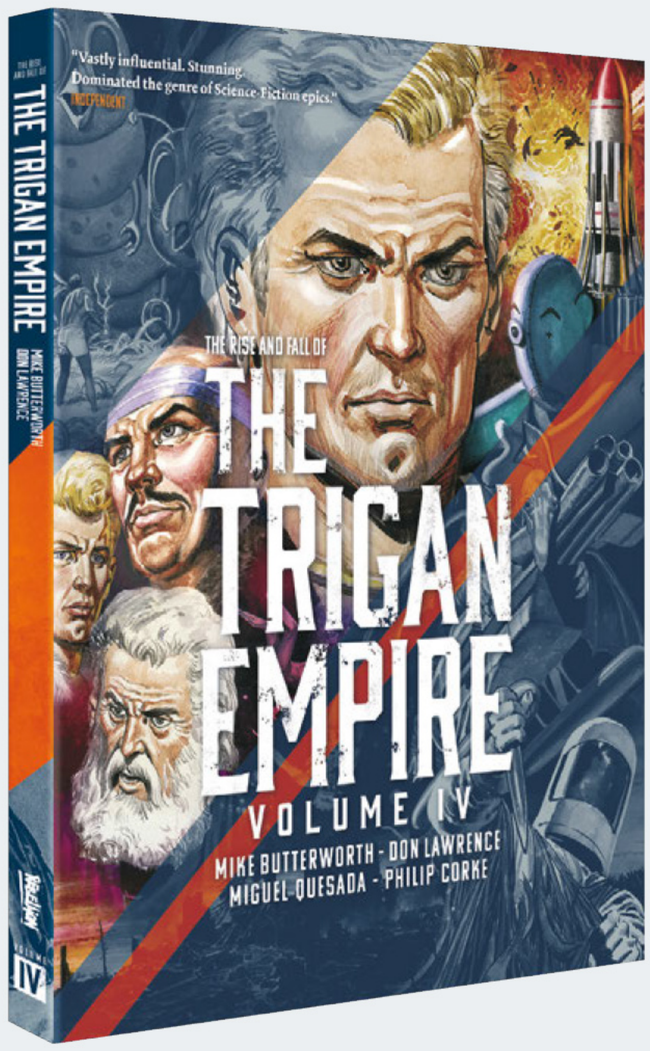

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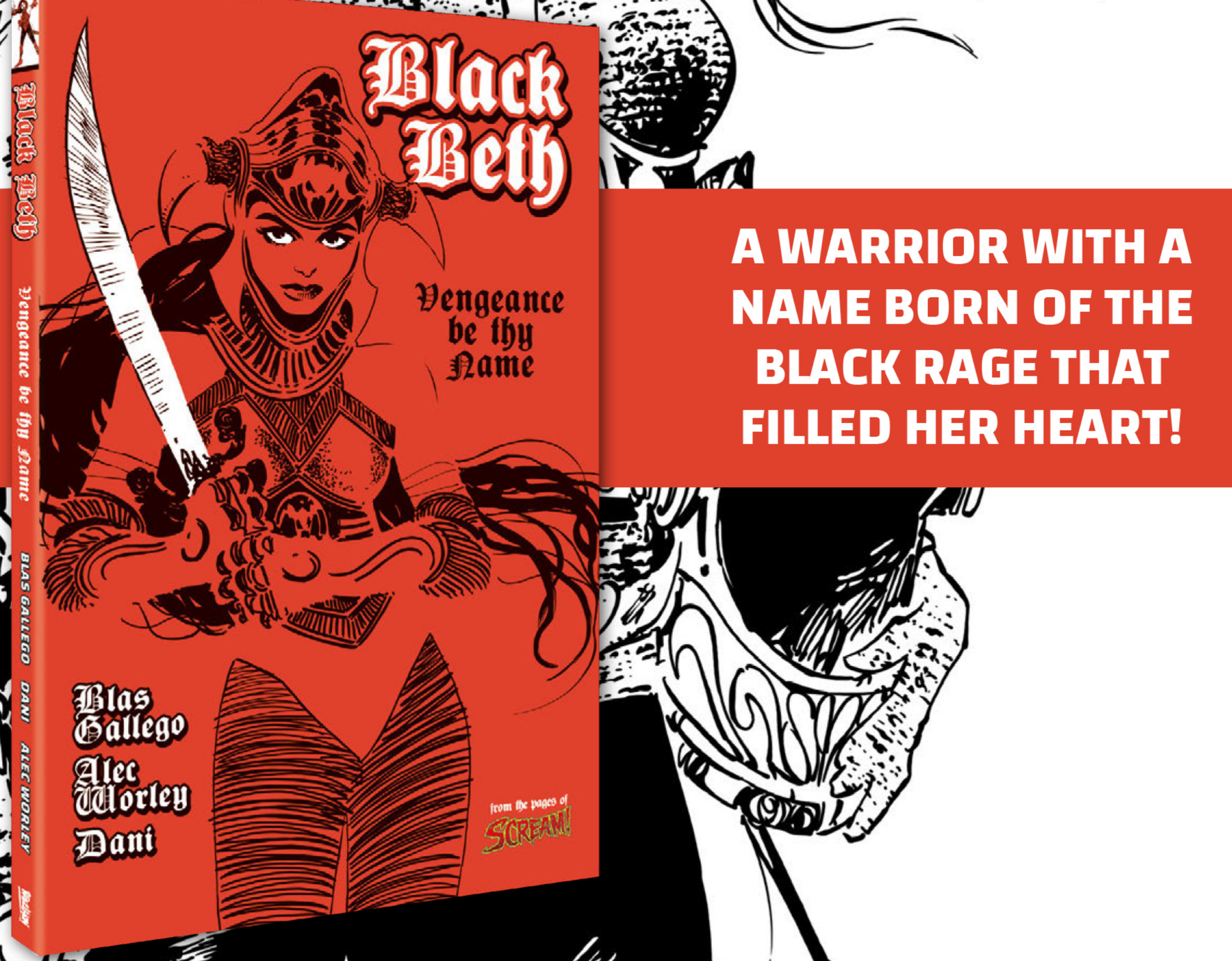

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

MIKE BUTTERWORTH

Mike Butterworth is primarily known in comic circles as the writer of *The Rise and Fall of the Trigan Empire*, but had previously written Battler Britton and *Buffalo Bill* strips for **Comet**, for **Sun** he wrote *Max Bravo*, *The Happy Hussar* and *Billy the Kid* (which was drawn by, amongst others, Don Lawrence). *The Trigan Empire* began in 1965 in **Ranger**, and continued when **Ranger** was absorbed into **Look and Learn** where it continued to be published through to 1982. From 1967 he also wrote crime novels under his full name, John Michael Butterworth, and gothic romances under the pseudonyms of Carola Salisbury and Sarah Kemp.

DON LAWRENCE

Don Lawrence was born in 1928, and worked for Mick Anglo on the **Marvelman** comic produced for Amalgamated Press, and then *Billy the Kid* in the comic **Sun**. When **Sun** was absorbed into **Lion** he moved on to illustrating *Olac the Gladiator*, *Karl the Viking* and *Maroc the Mighty*. In 1965 he teamed with Mike Butterworth to create *The Rise and Fall of the Trigan Empire* for **Ranger** magazine, and continued to paint the comic through its transition into **Look and Learn** through to 1976. During this period he also worked on *Fireball XL5* and *The Adventures of Tarzan* comic strips for **TV Century 21**. After leaving *The Trigan Empire* he worked with a Dutch publisher to create **Storm**, a post-apocalypse sci-fi series, which he would draw through to his retirement in 1999.

OLIVER FREY

Oliver Frey was born in Switzerland in 1948, and by the 60s he was studying at the London Film school, supporting himself by painting covers for **War Picture Library**. In the 1970s he replaced Don Lawrence as the main artist on *The Rise and Fall of The Trigan Empire*, and in the 1980s he worked on several *Dan Dare* stories for the revival of **Eagle**. Under the pen-name of Zack he drew many gay erotic comics including **Desert Studs**, **Hot for Boys**, and **Raw Recruits**. He also produced covers and serialised *The Terminal Man* for the computer games magazine **CRASH**, and created the art for the opening pre-title sequence of the 1978 **Superman** film.

HEAVY IS THE HEAD THAT WEARS THE CROWN!

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